INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT *for the* Members of the House Republican Conference *on the* Events Surrounding the September 11, 2012 Terrorist Attacks in Benghazi, Libya

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An ongoing Congressional investigation across five House Committees concerning the events surrounding the September 11, 2012, terrorist attacks on U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya has made several determinations to date, including:

- Reductions of security levels prior to the attacks in Benghazi were approved at the highest levels of the State Department, up to and including Secretary Clinton. This fact contradicts her testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on January 23, 2013.

- In the days following the attacks, White House and senior State Department officials altered accurate talking points drafted by the Intelligence Community in order to protect the State Department.

- Contrary to Administration rhetoric, the talking points were not edited to protect classified information. Concern for classified information is never mentioned in email traffic among senior Administration officials.

These preliminary findings illustrate the need for continued examination and oversight by the five House Committees. The Committees will continue to review who exactly was responsible for the failure to respond to the repeated requests for more security and for the effort to cover up the nature of the attacks, so that appropriate officials will be held accountable.

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This staff report has not been officially adopted by the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, or the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and therefore may not necessarily reflect the views of their Members.

Introduction

On September 11, 2012, armed militias with ties to terrorist organizations attacked U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya, killing four U.S. personnel: Ambassador Christopher Stevens; State Department Information Officer Sean Smith; and two American security officers – and former U.S. Navy SEALs – Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty. Given the gravity of these attacks and the loss of American life, the House Committees on Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, Intelligence, Judiciary, and Oversight and Government Reform initiated immediate inquiries into issues within each Committee's jurisdiction concerning the events surrounding the attacks.

In the course of their investigations, the Committees have interviewed dozens of officials and individuals with first-hand knowledge of the events, met with members of the military and diplomatic corps overseas, and reviewed tens of thousands of classified and unclassified documents, cables, emails, and reports. Members of Congress traveled on fact-finding missions to foreign countries, including Libya. The Committees paid particular attention to investigating allegations receiving public attention after the attacks and the associated findings are included in this report.

At the direction of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Majority Leader, the coordinated oversight work and assessments made to date are being presented to the Members of the House Republican Conference in this interim progress report. The Committees will continue to review available information, and to interview sources as they come forward. This progress report will be updated as warranted.

Findings

This progress report reveals a fundamental lack of understanding at the highest levels of the State Department as to the dangers presented in Benghazi, Libya, as well as a concerted attempt to insulate the Department of State from blame following the terrorist attacks. The Committees' majority staff summarizes findings to date as follows:

Before the Attacks:

- After the U.S.-backed Libyan revolution ended the Gadhafi regime, **the U.S. government did not deploy sufficient U.S. security elements to protect U.S. interests and personnel that remained on the ground**.
- **Senior State Department officials knew that the threat environment in Benghazi was high and that the Benghazi compound was vulnerable and unable to withstand an attack, yet the Department continued to systematically withdraw security personnel.**
- **Repeated requests for additional security were denied at the highest levels of the State Department.** For example, an April 2012 State Department cable bearing Secretary Hillary Clinton's signature acknowledged then-Ambassador Cretz's formal request for additional security assets but ordered the withdrawal of security elements to proceed as planned.
- **The attacks were not the result of a failure by the Intelligence Community (IC) to recognize or communicate the threat.** The IC collected considerable information about the threats in the region, and disseminated regular assessments to senior U.S. officials warning of the deteriorating security environment in Benghazi, which included threats to American interests, facilities, and personnel.
- **The President, as Commander-in-Chief, failed to proactively anticipate the significance of September 11 and provide the Department of Defense with the authority to launch offensive operations beyond self-defense.** Defense Department assets were correctly positioned for the general threat across the region, but the assets were not authorized at an alert posture to launch offensive operations beyond self-defense, and were provided no notice to defend diplomatic facilities.

During the Attacks:

- On the evening of September 11, 2012, **U.S. security teams on the ground in Benghazi exhibited extreme bravery** responding the attacks by al-Qa'ida-affiliated groups against the U.S. mission.
- **Department of Defense officials and military personnel reacted quickly to the attacks in Benghazi.** The effectiveness of their response was hindered on account of U.S. military forces not being properly postured to address the growing threats in northern Africa or to respond to a brief, high-intensity attack on U.S. personnel or interests across much of Africa.

After the Attacks:

- **The Administration willfully perpetuated a deliberately misleading and incomplete narrative that the attacks evolved from a political demonstration caused by a YouTube video.** U.S. officials on the ground reported – and video evidence confirms – that demonstrations outside the Benghazi Mission did not occur and that the incident began with an armed attack on the facility. Senior Administration officials knowingly minimized the role played by al-Qa'ida-affiliated entities and other associated groups in the attacks, and decided to exclude from the discussion the previous attempts by extremists to attack U.S. persons or facilities in Libya.

- **Administration officials crafted and continued to rely on incomplete and misleading talking points.** Specifically, after a White House Deputies Meeting on Saturday, September 15, 2012, the Administration altered the talking points to remove references to the likely participation of Islamic extremists in the attacks. The Administration also removed references to the threat of extremists linked to al-Qa'ida in Benghazi and eastern Libya, including information about at least five other attacks against foreign interests in Benghazi. Senior State Department officials requested – and the White House approved – that the details of the threats, specifics of the previous attacks, and previous warnings be removed to insulate the Department from criticism that it ignored the threat environment in Benghazi.

- **Evidence rebuts Administration claims that the talking points were modified to protect classified information or to protect an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).** Email exchanges during the interagency process do not reveal any concern with protecting classified information. Additionally, the Bureau itself approved a version of the talking points with significantly more information about the attacks and previous threats than the version that the State Department requested. Thus, the claim that the State Department's edits were made solely to protect that investigation is not credible.

- **The Administration deflected responsibility by blaming the IC for the information it communicated to the public in both the talking points and the subsequent narrative it perpetuated.** Had Administration spokesmen performed even limited due diligence inquiries into the intelligence behind the talking points or requested reports from personnel on the ground, they would have quickly understood that the situation was more complex than the narrative provided by Ambassador Susan Rice and others in the Administration.

- **The Administration's decision to respond to the Benghazi attacks with an FBI investigation, rather than military or other intelligence resources, contributed to the government's lack of candor about the nature of the attack.**

- **Responding to the attacks with an FBI investigation significantly delayed U.S. access to key witnesses and evidence and undermined the government's ability to bring those responsible for the attacks to justice in a timely manner.**

Policy Considerations

- **The events in Benghazi reflect the Administration's lack of a comprehensive national security strategy or a credible national security posture in the region.** The United States continues to maintain an inadequate defensive posture in North Africa and the Middle East as a result of the Administration's under-appreciation of the threat that al-Qa'ida and related terrorist groups pose in the region.

- **This singular event will be repeated unless the United States recognizes and responds to the threats we face around the world, and properly postures resources and security assets to counter and respond to those threats.** Until that time, the United States will remain in a reactionary mode and should expect more catastrophes like Benghazi, in which U.S. personnel on the ground perform bravely, but are not provided with the resources for an effective response. As those opposed to U.S. interests will continue to take advantage of perceived U.S. weaknesses, the United States will continue to lose credibility with its allies and face the worst of all possible outcomes in strategically important locations around the world.

- **Congress must maintain pressure on the Administration to ensure the United States takes all necessary steps to find the Benghazi attackers.** It has been more than seven months since the FBI investigation began, and there is very little progress. The risks of treating the Benghazi terrorist attacks as a law enforcement matter rather than a military matter are becoming increasingly clear. The failure to respond more assertively to the attacks and to impose meaningful consequences on those who planned and perpetrated them has contributed to a perception of U.S. weakness and retreat. Al-Qa'ida grew emboldened when the U.S. failed to respond forcibly and effectively to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (1993), U.S. Embassies in East Africa (1998), and the U.S.S. Cole (2000). Active terrorist organizations and potential recruits will also be emboldened to attack U.S. interests if the U.S. fails to hold those responsible for this attack accountable.

- **Congress must also provide an effective counterweight to the Administration's failure to adequately communicate the nature and the extent of the threats our country faces today.** The Administration must do more to develop a coherent and robust national security strategy, and Congress must hold it accountable to do so.

I. Prior to the Benghazi attacks, State Department officials in Libya made repeated requests for additional security that were denied in Washington despite ample documentation of the threat posed by violent extremist militias.

> ***I said, "Jim, you know what [is] most frustrating about this assignment? It's not the hardship, it's not the gunfire, it's not the threats. It's dealing and fighting against the people, programs, and personnel who are supposed to be supporting me … For me, the Taliban is on the inside of the building."***
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> ***Testimony of Regional Security Office for the U.S. Mission to Libya Eric Nordstrom before the House Oversight & Government Reform Committee, October 12, 2012***

Setting Up the Benghazi Mission

The Libyan revolution, which led to the overthrow of brutal dictator Muammar Gadhafi, was supported by the United States, most directly in the form of NATO air operations which lasted from March through October of 2011. After Gadhafi was killed in October of that year, the revolution's interim Transitional National Council (TNC) declared the country liberated, and began attempting to establish a democratically-elected government. Around this time, the TNC relocated its center of operations from Benghazi to Tripoli.

A State Department memorandum circulated at the end of 2011 recommended U.S. personnel remain in Benghazi.[1] It explained many Libyans were "strongly" in favor of a U.S. outpost in Benghazi, in part because they believed a U.S. presence in eastern Libya would ensure that the new Tripoli-based government fairly considered eastern Libyan interests.

The memorandum also outlined conditions for a U.S. mission in Benghazi (the "Benghazi Mission,") which were approved by Under Secretary for Management Patrick F. Kennedy.[2] These **conditions included the staffing of five Diplomatic Security (DS) agents**. Diplomatic Security agents manage embassy security programs for the State Department and generally serve as the first line of defense for diplomatic personnel when stationed abroad.[3] They include the Regional Security Officers (RSOs) who serve as each U.S. embassy's principal security advisor.

The Deteriorating Security Environment in Benghazi

In spite of the TNC's efforts after the revolution, U.S. officials were aware that Libya remained volatile. U.S. officials were particularly concerned with the numerous armed militias that operated freely throughout the country, including those in Benghazi with ties to al-Qa'ida

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[1] (SBU) Action Memorandum for Under Secretary for Management Patrick F. Kennedy, "Future Operations in Benghazi, Libya." December 27, 2011.
[2] *Id.*
[3] "Securing Our Embassies Overseas." U.S. Department of State. Retrieved at: http://www.state.gov/m/ds/about/overview/c9004.htm.

and Ansar Al Sharia.[4] In August 2012, the State Department warned U.S. citizens against traveling to Libya, explaining that "inter-militia conflict can erupt at any time or any place."[5]

The deteriorating security environment in Benghazi throughout 2012 mirrored the declining situation in the rest of Libya. From June 2011 to July 2012, then-Regional Security Officer (RSO) for Libya Eric Nordstrom compiled a **list of more than 200 security incidents in Libya, 50 of which took place in Benghazi**.[6] These incidents included violent acts directed against diplomats and diplomatic facilities, international organizations, and third-country nationals, as well as large-scale militia clashes.[7] U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi came under direct fire twice in the months leading up to September 11, 2012: first in April 2012, when disgruntled Libyan contract guards allegedly threw a small improvised explosive device (IED) over the perimeter wall; and in June 2012, when unknown assailants used an IED to blow a hole in the perimeter wall.

The decisions by the British Embassy, United Nations, and the International Committee of the Red Cross to withdraw their personnel from Benghazi after armed assailants launched directed attacks against each organization were additional major indicators of the increasingly threatening environment. These developments caused Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Wood, who led the U.S. military's efforts to supplement diplomatic security in Libya, to recommend that the State Department consider pulling out of Benghazi altogether. Lieutenant Colonel Wood explained that after the withdrawal of these other organizations, "it was apparent to me that we were the last [Western] flag flying in Benghazi. We were the last thing on their target list to remove from Benghazi."[8]

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[4] Transcribed interview of Benghazi Assistant Regional Security Officer David Oliveira, October 9, 2012. *See also* "Al-Qaeda in Libya: A Profile," A Report Prepared By The Federal Research Division, Library Of Congress, Under An Interagency Agreement With The Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office's Irregular Warfare Support Program, August 2012, at p. 4.

[5] Travel Warning, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. Libya. August 27, 2012. Retrieved at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_5762.html.

[6] U.S. Embassy Tripoli, Libya, Regional Security Office, "Security Incidents since June 2011."

[7] *Id.* See also, the State Department's Accountability Review Board Report for a list of security incidents in Benghazi, Libya during 2012 that were directed at western interests. These include: a March 2012 event in which members of a militia searching for a suspect fire weapons near the U.S. diplomatic compound and attempt to enter; an April 2012 incident in which a U.K. armored diplomatic vehicle is attacked after driving into a local protest; an April 2012 event in which a homemade explosive device is thrown over the U.S. diplomatic compound's north wall; an April 2012 event in which an IED was thrown at the motorcade of the U.N. Special Envoy to Libya in Benghazi; an April 2012 event in which a Special Mission Benghazi principal officer is evacuated from International Medical University (IMU) after a fistfight escalated to gunfire between Tripoli-based trade delegation security personnel and IMU security; a May 2012, event in which the Benghazi International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) building was struck by rocket propelled grenades; a June 2012 IED attack on the U.S. diplomatic compound; a June 2012, event in Benghazi where the British Ambassador's convoy was attacked with a rocket propelled grenade and possible AK-47s; a June 2012, event in which a rocket propelled grenade attack is made on the ICRC compound in Misrata (400 km west of Benghazi); a June 2012, attack in which protestors storm the Tunisian consulate in Benghazi; an August 2012 event in which a small bomb is thrown at an Egyptian diplomat's vehicle parked outside of the Egyptian consulate in Benghazi.

[8] Testimony of Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Wood before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, October 10, 2012.

Security Arrangements for the Benghazi Mission

Despite mounting security concerns, for most of 2012 the Benghazi Mission was forced to rely on fewer than the approved number of DS agents. Specifically, while the State Department memorandum signed by Under Secretary Kennedy stated that five agents would be provided, this was the case for only 23 days in 2012.[9] Reports indicate the Benghazi Mission was typically staffed with only three DS agents, and sometimes as few as one DS agent.[10]

For its security, the Benghazi Mission used a combination of these few DS agents, as well as a U.S. Military Security Support Team (SST), and two Mobile Security Detachment (MSD) teams provided by the State Department. The SST consisted of 16 Defense Department special operations personnel. As commander of the SST, Lieutenant Colonel Wood reported to the U.S. Chief of Mission in Libya.[11] The MSD teams each consisted of six DS agents, all of whom underwent advanced training to augment security at high-threat posts.[12]

In addition to the security provided by U.S. agencies, the Benghazi Mission used local, unarmed guards, who were responsible for activating the alarm in the event of an attack, as well as four armed members of the February 17 Martyrs Brigade, who were to serve as a quick reaction force. The February 17 Martyrs Brigade was one of the militias that fought for Gadhafi's overthrow. Numerous reports have indicated that the Brigade had extremist connections, and it had been implicated in the kidnapping of American citizens as well as in the threats against U.S. military assets. In addition, on September 8, 2012, just days before Ambassador Stevens arrived in Benghazi, the February 17 Martyrs Brigade told State Department officials that the group would no longer support U.S. movements in the city, including the Ambassador's visit.[13]

Internal State Department Communications on Security

State Department officials in Washington acknowledged that the Benghazi Mission lacked sufficient resources to protect its personnel in a deteriorating security environment. However, in a cable signed by Secretary Clinton in April 2012, the State Department settled on a plan to scale back security assets for the U.S. Mission in Libya, including Benghazi. Specifically, despite acknowledging Ambassador Cretz's March 2012 cable requesting additional security assets, the April plan called for the removal of the two remaining MSD teams, the third initially deployed MSD team having been previously removed. This

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[9] Department of State, Accountability Review Board for Benghazi Attack of September 2012, December 19, 2012, at p. 31; Interview of Regional Security Officer Eric Nordstrom, October 1, 2012.

[10] Interview of Regional Security Officer Eric Nordstrom, October 1, 2012. See also, email from James Bacigalupo to Brian Papanu and David Sparrowgrove, May 7, 2012, 1:01 p m., Subject: FW: Special Agent Tony Zamudio's TDY Performance in Benghazi.

[11] Testimony of Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Wood before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, October 10, 2012.

[12] "Securing Our Embassies Overseas." U.S. Department of State. Retrieved at: http://www.state.gov/m/ds/about/overview/c9004.htm.

[13] Email from Alec Henderson to John B. Martinec, "RE: Benghazi QRF agreement," (Sep. 9, 2012 11:31 PM).

reduced security footprint was of significant concern to U.S. Ambassador to Libya Gene Cretz, who had requested the continued deployment of both MSD teams, or at least additional DS agents to replace them, and the full five DS agents for the Benghazi Mission that the December 2011 Kennedy memorandum documented would be stationed in Benghazi. His successor, Ambassador Christopher Stevens – who replaced him in May 2012 – shared Ambassador Cretz's concerns.

Critical Cables

During 2012, in numerous communications with the State Department, officials from the U.S. Mission in Libya stress both the inadequacy of security as well as the need for additional personnel. Two critical cables warrant specific mention:

• On **March 28, 2012**, Ambassador Cretz sends a cable to Secretary Clinton requesting additional security assets.

• On **April 19, 2012**, the response cable from the Department of State to Embassy Tripoli, bearing Secretary Clinton's signature, acknowledges Ambassador Cretz's request for additional security but instead articulates a plan to scale back security assets for the U.S. Mission in Libya, including the Benghazi Mission.

In addition, the April 2012 cable from Secretary Clinton recommended that the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the U.S. Mission in Libya conduct a "joint re-assessment of the number of DS agents requested for Benghazi."[14] This prompted one frustrated Embassy Tripoli employee to remark to her colleagues that it "looks like no movement on the full complement of [five DS] personnel for Benghazi, but rather a reassessment to bring the numbers lower."[15]

In May 2012, Ambassador Stevens replaced Ambassador Cretz and continued to make requests for additional security. In an email in early June, he told a State Department official that with national elections occurring in Libya in July and August, the U.S. Mission in Libya "**would feel much safer if we could keep two MSD teams with us through this period [to support] our staff and [personal detail] for me and the [Deputy Chief of Mission] and any VIP visitors**."[16] The State Department official replied that due to other commitments and limited resources, "unfortunately, MSD cannot support the request."[17]

[14] 12 STATE 38939, April 19, 2012, Signature: CLINTON.
[15] Email from Jennifer A. Larson to Eric Nordstrom, Ambassador Gene Cretz, et al., April 21, 2012, 1:57 p.m., Subject: Re: Tripoli – Request for DS DTY and FTE Support.
[16] Email chain between Ambassador Chris Stevens and John Moretti, June 7, 2012, 3:34 a m., Subject: MSD/Tripoli.
[17] *Id.*

Despite the denial of Ambassador Stevens' request, Embassy Tripoli officials persisted in their requests for additional security. In July 2012, for example, RSO Eric Nordstrom alerted DS officials in Washington that he intended to submit a formal cable request for an extension of the SST and MSD teams. DS personnel in Washington alerted Mr. Nordstrom that Ms. Charlene Lamb, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security, was "reluctant to ask for an SST extension, apparently out of concern that it would be embarrassing to the [State Department] to continue to have to rely on [Defense Department] assets to protect our Mission."[18] Moreover, in response to Mr. Nordstrom's intent to request an MSD extension, Ms. Lamb responded, "NO, I do not [I repeat] not want them to ask for the MSD team to stay!"[19]

Critical Emails

June 7, 2012: Ambassador Stevens asks the State Department to keep the two MSD teams the Clinton April cable ordered removed from Libya. This request is denied.

July 6, 2012: Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security Lamb strongly asserts that Embassy Tripoli should not make a formal request for an extension of the SST and MSD teams.

On July 9, 2012, Ambassador Stevens responded with a cable that stressed that the security conditions in Libya had not met the requisite benchmarks established by the State Department and the U.S. Mission in Libya to warrant initiating a security drawdown.[20] He requested that a sufficient number of security personnel, whether DS agents, or SST or MSD team members, be permitted to stay.[21] Under Secretary Kennedy rejected the request for the SST extension, and both the SST and MSD teams were subsequently withdrawn.[22] Although the State Department made some modest physical security upgrades to the Benghazi Mission, the systematic withdrawal of existing security personnel resulted in a security posture for the Benghazi Mission that the State Department's Accountability Review Board later determined was "inadequate for Benghazi."[23]

Multiple Committees have reviewed the State Department documents cited in the previous sections and remain concerned that the documents do not reconcile with public comments Secretary Clinton made regarding how high in the State Department the security

[18] Email from David C. McFarland to Ambassador Chris Stevens, et al., July 9, 2012, 12:24 p.m., Subject: (SBU) Tripoli O-I July 9.
[19] (SBU) Email from Charlene Lamb to State Department personnel. July 6, 2012, 2:59 p m. Subject: Re: Tripoli – Request for extension of TDY Security Personnel.
[20] 12 TRIPOLI 690, July 9, 2012. Signature: STEVENS.
[21] *Id.*
[22] Briefing by Under Secretary for Management Patrick F. Kennedy to Congressional staff, January 2013.
[23] Department of State, Accountability Review Board for Benghazi Attack of September 2012, December 19, 2012, at p. 4.

situation and requests were discussed. Despite acknowledging a security request made on April 19, 2012, Secretary Clinton made the following statements before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on January 23, 2013:

- "I have made it very clear that the security cables did not come to my attention or above the assistant secretary level where the ARB [Accountability Review Board] placed responsibility. Where, as I think Ambassador Pickering said, 'the rubber hit the road.'"[24]
- "You know, Congressman, it was very disappointing to me that the [Accountability Review Board] concluded there were inadequacies and problems in the responsiveness of our team here in Washington to the security requests that were made by our team in Libya. And I was not aware of that going on, it was not brought to my attention, but obviously it's something we're fixing and intend to put into place protocols and systems to make sure it doesn't happen again. … Well if I could – 1.43 million cables a year come to the State Department. They are all addressed to me. They do not all come to me. They are reported through the bureaucracy."[25]

In addition, it remains unclear why the State Department chose to reduce security in the face of such a challenging security environment and chose to deny multiple requests from Embassy Tripoli for more assistance. It is clear that funding – or a lack thereof – is not the reason for the reductions in security, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security Lamb testified and as emails reviewed by the Committees attest.[26]

Moreover, a lack of funding would not have been at issue with respect to the rejection of the request to extend the deployment of the SST, as that team was provided via the Defense Department at no expense to the State Department. The Administration owes the American people an explanation regarding these unanswered questions, which must be explored in greater depth in the weeks and months ahead.

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[24] Testimony of Secretary Hillary Clinton before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on January 23, 2013.
[25] *Id.*
[26] Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security Charlene Lamb before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, October 10, 2012; email exchange between Assistant Secretary Eric Boswell and Diplomatic Security Chief Financial Officer Robert Baldre, September 28, 2012 ("I do not feel that we have ever been at a point where we sacrificed security due to a lack of funding...Typically Congress has provided sufficient funding.")

II. The volatile security environment erupted on September 11, 2012, when militias composed of al-Qa'ida-affiliated extremists attacked U.S. interests in Benghazi.

The Committees have concluded that U.S. security personnel on the ground exhibited extreme bravery in conducting defensive actions and rescue operations in the face of coordinated and sophisticated attacks on the U.S. presence in Benghazi.

Ambassador Stevens' Visit to Benghazi

Ambassador Stevens previously served in Libya as Deputy Chief of Mission (2007 – 2009) and as Special Representative to the Transitional National Council (March 2011 – November 2011). He became U.S. Ambassador to Libya in May 2012. Ambassador Stevens traveled to Benghazi on September 10, 2012, to fill staffing gaps between principal officers in Benghazi and to allow him to reconnect with local contacts. He also planned to attend the establishment of a new American Corner at a local Benghazi school.[27] It has been reported to multiple Committee staff - but not confirmed - that an additional purpose of his visit was to personally assess the security situation in Benghazi in order to lend more urgency to his planned request for additional security resources from Washington.

The Attack on the Benghazi Mission Begins

On September 11, 2012, there were a total of 28 U.S. personnel on the ground at the Benghazi Mission and at the Annex in Benghazi, including Ambassador Stevens.[28]

At appropriately 9:40 PM,[29] dozens of armed men approached the Benghazi Mission and quickly breached the front gate, setting fire to the guard house and main diplomatic building. The attackers were members of extremist groups, including the Libya-based Ansar al-Sharia (AAS) and al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). A State Department officer in the Benghazi Mission's Tactical Operations Center (TOC) immediately notified the Annex, Embassy Tripoli, and State Department Headquarters that the Benghazi Mission was under attack and requested assistance. At no point did U.S. officials on the ground report a protest.[30]

At the time of the attack, Ambassador Stevens, Information Officer Sean Smith, and a DS agent were located in Villa C, the main building of the Benghazi Mission. At approximately 10:00 PM, within 20 minutes of the attack, Ambassador Stevens, Mr. Smith, and the DS agent suffered debilitating effects from smoke inhalation due to the heavy smoke as the main diplomatic building burned. All three tried to escape by crawling along the floor towards a window. Due to the thick smoke, the DS agent unknowingly lost contact with Ambassador

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[27] American Corners are partnerships between the Public Affairs sections of United States Embassies and host institutions. They provide access to current and reliable information from and about the United States via book collections, the Internet, and through local programming to the general public overseas or abroad.

[28] As described in this timeline, as the attacks were ongoing, seven additional personnel arrived from Tripoli to assist, **bringing the total to 35 U.S. personnel on the ground that night**.

[29] All times local.

[30] Emails from State Department Operations Center to various recipients, September 11, 2012, at 4:05 p.m. Eastern and 6:08 p.m. Eastern.

Stevens and Mr. Smith at some point along the smoke-filled escape route. After crawling out of a window and realizing the Ambassador and Mr. Smith were not with him, the DS agent, under gunfire, repeatedly re-entered the burning building to search for them. As he was doing so, the DS agent also used his radio to call for help. Security officers from other parts of the Benghazi Mission responded and joined the DS agent's search for the missing individuals.

Within 25 minutes of the initial assault, a security team at the Annex was notified and departed for the Benghazi Mission. The security team tried unsuccessfully to secure heavy weapons from militia members encountered along the way, and the team faced some resistance, including gunfire, in getting to the Benghazi Mission. Over the course of the next hour, the Annex security team joined the Benghazi Mission team in searching for Ambassador Stevens and Mr. Smith. Together, the teams repelled sporadic gunfire and RPG fire while assembling all the remaining U.S. personnel at the facility.

While the security officers were able to retrieve the body of Mr. Smith, they were unable to locate Ambassador Stevens. After 90 minutes of repeated attempts to enter the burning main diplomatic building to search for the Ambassador, the teams assessed the security situation had deteriorated to the point that they were forced to abandon their search. The Annex security team loaded all U.S. personnel into vehicles and started the process of departing for the Annex, with the first vehicle departing at 11:15 PM and the second vehicle departing at 11:30 PM. Meanwhile, at approximately 11:10 PM, Defense Department unarmed surveillance aircraft arrived overhead. As the vehicles exited the Benghazi Mission, they encountered heavy gunfire and at least one roadblock in their route to the Annex.

Escalation at the Annex

At approximately 12:30 AM, a team of seven U.S. personnel departed Tripoli. This team arrived in Benghazi at 1:30 AM. At around 5:15 AM, within 15 minutes of the Tripoli team's arrival at the Annex, a short but deadly and coordinated terrorist attack began on the annex.[31] The attack, which included small arms, RPG, and well-aimed mortar fire, mortally wounded two American security officers, Mr. Tyrone Woods and Mr. Doherty, and severely wounded two other U.S. personnel. At 6:05 AM, the 31 survivors from the initial attack on the Benghazi Mission departed the Annex for the Benghazi airport. The surviving Americans departed Benghazi along with three of the four fallen Americans at 7:40 AM on September 12, 2012. The C-17 deployed from Germany departed Tripoli at 7:17 PM, carrying the American survivors and the remains of Mr. Smith, Mr. Woods, and Mr. Doherty. The plane arrived in Ramstein, Germany at 10:19 PM on September 12, 2012.

[31] The Tripoli team spent the hours between the arrival at the airport and the arrival at the Annex focused on gaining situational awareness about its main mission, which at the time was locating Ambassador Stevens, who they thought might have been kidnapped.

Timeline for Ambassador Stevens

Due to the deteriorating security situation and exhaustive, but unsuccessful search for Ambassador Stevens, the security teams made the decision to evacuate the survivors of the attack on the Benghazi Mission and the remains of Mr. Smith about 90 minutes after the attack began. The evacuation began at approximately 11:30 PM.

At approximately 1:00 AM on September 12, 2012, local Libyans found the remains of Ambassador Stevens in the main diplomatic building at the Benghazi Mission and transported him to the hospital. The Libyans apparently did not realize who the Ambassador was, but they alerted the State Department of his location by using the cell phone that was in the Ambassador's pocket. Libyan doctors tried unsuccessfully to resuscitate Ambassador Stevens upon his arrival at the hospital. At 8:15 PM that evening, his remains were transported from the hospital to the Benghazi airport to begin the journey to Tripoli, to Germany, and then finally home.

The Defense Department's Timeline

At 9:59 PM,[32] within twenty minutes of the initial attack, Defense Department officials directed an unarmed, unmanned surveillance aircraft to reposition overhead of the Benghazi Mission. The aircraft arrived at 11:10 PM, approximately 20 minutes before the evacuation of the Benghazi Mission began.

In Washington, at 10:32 PM, an officer in the National Military Command Center at the Pentagon,[33] after receiving initial reports of the incident from the State Department, notified the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. The information was quickly passed to Secretary of Defense, Mr. Leon E. Panetta, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin E. Dempsey. Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey attended a previously scheduled meeting with the President at the White House at 11:00 PM, approximately 80 minutes after the attack began. The Defense Department reported that principals discussed potential responses to the ongoing situation.[34]

Following the White House meeting, Secretary Panetta returned to the Pentagon and convened a series of meetings from 12:00 AM to 2:00 AM with senior officials, including General Dempsey and General Carter F. Ham, the Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), which is the Geographic Combatant Command responsible for U.S. military activities in Libya. They discussed additional response options for Benghazi and the potential outbreak of further violence throughout the region, particularly in Tunis, Tunisia; Cairo, Egypt; and Sana'a, Yemen.

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[32] Again all times local

[33] The purpose of the National Military Command Center (NMCC) is to support military command and control for the Commander in Chief and the Secretary of Defense (often referred to as the National Command Authority). It is operated by the Joint Staff, to coordinate joint actions and coordinate with the supported Combatant Command. Principally located at the Pentagon, the NMCC broadly consists of multiple people, organizations, command and control systems, procedures, and facilities.

[34] Unclassified timeline, Department of Defense.

To help expedite the movement of forces after the receipt of formal authorization, Pentagon officials verbally conveyed orders to other Combatant Commands.

Specifically, Secretary Panetta verbally directed the deployment of:

1. two Marine Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST) platoons from Rota, Spain to the Benghazi Mission and Embassy Tripoli;
2. a U.S. European Command (EUCOM) Commander's in-Extremis Force (CIF) to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe; and
3. a special operations force based in the United States to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.

Concurrently, at 12:30 AM, a six-man security team and one linguist stationed at Embassy Tripoli departed for Benghazi; the team landed in Benghazi at 1:30 AM. At 2:39 AM, officers in the National Military Command Center transmitted the formal authorizations for the deployments of the two Marine FAST platoons and the EUCOM special operations force. At 2:53 AM, the U.S-based special operations force received formal authorization to deploy.

Analysis of the Defense Department's Response

Despite the brave and honorable efforts of the individuals on the ground in Benghazi – reinforced by the team from Tripoli – serious concerns regarding the Defense Department's systemic response required extensive review. **Combined with the failure of the President to anticipate the significance of the day and to proactively authorize the Defense Department with an alert posture to launch offensive operations beyond self-defense, forces were provided no notice to defend diplomatic facilities.** Fundamentally, the progress report finds that the Benghazi Mission did not have a sufficient, layered defense designed to fend off an attack until a military response could be deployed to provide a decisive conclusion to an assault. The oversight review of the Defense Department's response, however, has highlighted serious deficiencies in the military's strategic posture in Africa – and the region – which require corrective action and necessitate further examination by congressional committees of jurisdiction.

The military command responsible for this region is U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), which officially became one of the Defense Department's six geographic commands in 2008. The Command is responsible for all Department of Defense operations, exercises, and security cooperation efforts on the Continent of Africa, its island nations, and surrounding waters. AFRICOM faces serious resource deficiencies: it does not have any Army or Marine Corps units formally assigned to the command; it shares Air Force and Navy components with U.S. European Command (EUCOM); and it did not have a Commander's in-Extremis Force (CIF) assigned to the command at the time of the attack on September 11, 2012. Moreover,

AFRICOM still lacks a fully constituted CIF with vital and unique enabling capabilities.[35] As a result, when the U.S. needed to respond swiftly to the attacks in Benghazi, the Defense Department did not task AFRICOM. Instead, it was forced to task EUCOM's CIF to respond, which was engaged in a training mission in Croatia.

In addition, because AFRICOM does not have assigned Marine FAST platoons – which are limited-duration, expeditionary security forces capable of responding to emergencies – it had to rely on elements of a FAST unit assigned to EUCOM for response in Benghazi. The Marine FAST platoon in Rota, Spain was hindered in its response because it lacked dedicated airlift at its location; the airlift was in Germany. Even if the airlift had been co-located with the platoon, the platoon would not have been able to arrive in time to save the lives of the four Americans killed in the attack.

The House Armed Services Committee also examined the deployment of stateside-based response forces. The special operations force deployed from the continental United States (CONUS) reached the staging based in southern Europe approximately 24 hours after the initial attack, even though the force was forward-leaning in its preparations as it awaited formal authorization to deploy. The Benghazi attack highlights significant drawbacks of policy options that solely rely on a CONUS-based response force, and the Committee will continue its vigorous oversight of the global disposition of military forces to determine whether the Department of Defense is appropriately postured to more rapidly respond to similar incidents in the future.

In addition, the House Armed Services Committee conducted a review of air assets available to respond to Benghazi. No U.S. government element refused or denied requests for emergency assistance during the crisis. The evidence also does not show there were armed air assets above Benghazi at any time or that any such assets were called off from assisting U.S. personnel on the ground. According to witness testimony, the security officials on the ground did use laser sights, but they did so as an escalatory demonstration of force in an effort to deter some attackers. They were not lasing targets for air assets.[36]

The House Armed Services Committee also examined the question of whether the Defense Department failed to deploy assets to Benghazi because it believed the attack was over after the first phase. The progress report finds that officials at the Defense Department were monitoring the situation throughout and kept the forces that were initially deployed flowing into the region. No evidence has been provided to suggest these officials refused to deploy resources because they thought the situation had been sufficiently resolved.

Similarly, the evidence does not show that military commanders involved in the U.S. military's response to the terrorist attacks in Benghazi were relieved of command, transferred, or encouraged to seek early retirement as a result of their actions in response to the attacks. In the

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[35] U.S. Africa Command Posture Hearing testimony at the House Armed Services Committee. March 15, 2013.
[36] House Intelligence Community staff briefing with key surviving personnel and U.S. security officials. December 14, 2012.

case of General Carter Ham, Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), House Armed Services Committee staff were aware of General Ham's plans to retire well in advance of September 11, 2012.

The disposition of military forces is a reflection of policy, strategy, and resources. Because of a number of factors – including the lack of a coherent Administration policy toward North Africa; an ad hoc and reactive Administration strategy for addressing threats to U.S. interests in the region; a lack of resources for AFRICOM; and the short duration of the attack – the Department of Defense was unable to provide an effective military response to the Benghazi attacks. Although responsible military officers and civilian officials within the Department of Defense reacted quickly to the attacks in Benghazi, **the effectiveness of their response was hindered because U.S. military forces were not properly postured** to address the growing threats in northern Africa or to respond to a brief, high-intensity attack on U.S. personnel or interests across much of Africa.

Analysis of the Intelligence Community's Role

The Benghazi terrorist attacks did not constitute an intelligence failure. The Intelligence Community collected considerable information about the threat and disseminated regular assessments warning of the deteriorating security environment in Benghazi and risks to American interests, facilities, and personnel.

The House Intelligence Committee examined the question of why the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) did not provide an immediate and specific tactical warning of the attack in Benghazi. **A review of relevant documents confirmed that the intelligence community did not possess intelligence indicating planning or intentions for an attack on the Benghazi facility on or about September 11, 2012**. The review, however, also demonstrated that any official responsible for security at a U.S. facility or for personnel in Benghazi or the region would have had **sufficient warning of the deteriorating security situation, the corresponding increasing threat, and the expressed intent of anti-U.S. extremists in the region to attack Western and specifically U.S. targets**.

Throughout 2012, there were more than 20 attacks against Western and international interests in Benghazi. The IC monitored these and other extremist activities in North Africa and published hundreds of reports and assessments related to threats to these interests in the region before the September 11 attacks.[37] These reports and assessments, which were available to senior policymakers in the government, including those at the State Department and the White House, made clear that there were serious and credible threats to American interests and facilities in the region and in Benghazi specifically.[38] In addition, these reports and assessments made

[37] HPSCI review of intelligence assessments, cables, and reports.
[38] *Id.*

clear that the Benghazi Mission was the subject of credible threats, although no reporting warned of the attack on September 11, 2012.[39]

Other U.S. facilities were raided in September 2012, and known al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorists were involved in each of the incidents. Also on September 11, Egyptian protesters scaled the walls of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, which at least four senior jihadists with well-documented ties to al-Qa'ida helped instigate.[40] On September 13th, hundreds of Yemenis – including some al-Qa'ida-linked individuals – stormed the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen, but were repelled by local security forces. On September 14th, Ansar-al-Sharia-Tunisia (an al-Qa'ida-affiliated group) participated in an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia, and set fire to the nearby American school.

[39] *Id.*
[40] *Id.*

III. After the attacks, the Administration perpetuated a deliberately misleading and incomplete narrative that the violence grew out of a demonstration caused by a YouTube video. The Administration consciously decided not to discuss extremist involvement or previous attacks against Western interests in Benghazi.

The U.S. government immediately had information that the attacks were conducted by al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorists, yet Administration officials downplayed those connections, and focused on the idea that provocation for violence resulted from a YouTube video.

Analysis At the Time of the Attack

The U.S. government knew immediately that the attacks constituted an act of terror. In an "Ops Alert" issued shortly after the attack began, the State Department Operations Center notified senior Department officials, the White House Situation Room, and others, that the Benghazi compound was under attack and that "approximately 20 armed people fired shots; explosions have been heard as well."[41] Two hours later, the Operations Center issued an alert that al-Qa'ida linked Ansar al-Sharia (AAS) claimed responsibility for the attack and had called for an attack on Embassy Tripoli.[42] **Neither alert mentioned that there had been a protest at the location of the attacks.[43]** Further, Administration documents provided to the Committees show that there was ample evidence that the attack was planned and intentional. **The coordinated, complex, and deadly attack on the Annex – that included sophisticated weapons – is perhaps the strongest evidence that the attacks were not spontaneous. The question of why a deliberately misleading and incomplete narrative to the contrary was initially perpetuated by the Administration despite the existence of this information has not yet been fully answered and must be addressed as oversight efforts continue.**

Timeline of the Administration's Narrative

In the days after the events, the White House and senior Administration officials sought to portray the attacks as provoked by a YouTube video.[44] The President, Secretary Clinton, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney, and United States Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice each made statements denouncing the video and condemning those who purportedly used it to justify their behavior.[45] The President and Secretary Clinton also appeared in a $70,000 advertisement campaign in Pakistan to disavow the video.[46]

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[41] Email from State Department Operations Center to various recipients, September 11, 2012, 4:05 p m. Eastern.
[42] Email from State Department Operations Center to various recipients, September 11, 2012, 6:08 p m. Eastern.
[43] The ARB also concluded that "there was no protest prior to the attacks, which were unanticipated in their scale and intensity."
[44] "Administration Statements on the Attack in Benghazi," The New York Times, September 27, 2012. See also, Remarks by the President to the UN General Assembly, United Nation Headquarters, New York, New York, September 25, 2012, 10:22 a m.
[45] *Id.*
[46] Found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6akGlF6g-Zw.

On Sunday, September 16, 2012, Ambassador Rice appeared on five morning television programs to discuss the Administration's account of the attack. In nearly identical statements, she stated that the attack was a spontaneous protest in response to a "hateful video," similar to what transpired in Cairo, Egypt, earlier that day.[47] Rice asserted that "we do not have information at present that leads us to conclude that this was premeditated or preplanned."[48] Her interviews stand in sharp contrast to interviews given on the same morning talk shows by the President of the Libyan National Congress, Mohamad Magarif, who characterized the attack as criminal and preplanned.[49] Further, on that same day and prior to Ambassador Rice's scheduled appearances on the Sunday morning programs, a senior official on the ground in Libya informed senior leaders at the State Department that there was no demonstration prior to the attack.[50]

The Administration echoed Ambassador Rice's statements until September 19 when National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) Director Matt Olsen testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee that our diplomats died "in the course of a terrorist attack on our embassy."[51]

Director Olsen's testimony marked a significant shift in the Administration's rhetoric. Immediately afterward, Administration officials began referring to the event as a terrorist attack. On September 20, 2012, Mr. Carney stated that, "it is, I think, self-evident that what happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack."[52] Similarly, on September 21, Secretary Clinton stated, "What happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack, and we will not rest until we have tracked down and brought to justice the terrorists who murdered four Americans."[53] On October 9, the State Department held a conference call briefing for reporters in which Department officials publicly acknowledged that there had been no protest outside the Benghazi diplomatic facility prior to the assault. Members should note that the following day, senior State Department officials were scheduled to appear before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Analysis of the Evolving Drafts of the Talking Points

To protect the State Department, the Administration deliberately removed references to al-Qa'ida-linked groups and previous attacks in Benghazi in the talking points used by Ambassador Rice, thereby perpetuating the deliberately misleading and incomplete narrative that the attacks evolved from a demonstration caused by a YouTube video.

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[47] "Timeline: How Benghazi attack, probe unfolded," CBS News, November 2, 2012.
[48] *Id.*
[49] Transcript of Meet the Press interview found at: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-3460_162-57513819/face-the-nation-transcripts-september-16-2012-libyan-pres-magariaf-amb-rice-and-sen-mccain/.
[50] Email from William V. Roebuck to Beth Jones, "Update: 9-16-12," (Sept. 16, 2012 8:38 AM).
[51] Testimony of National Counterterrorism Center Director Matt Olsen before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, September 19, 2012.
[52] "Timeline: How Benghazi attack, probe unfolded," CBS News, November 2, 2012.
[53] *Id.*

The Administration's talking points were developed in an interagency process that focused more on protecting the reputation and credibility of the State Department than on explaining to the American people the facts surrounding the fatal attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel in Libya. Congressional investigators were given access to email exchanges, in which White House and senior Department officials discussed and edited the talking points. **Those emails clearly reveal that Administration officials intentionally removed references in the talking points to the likely participation by Islamic extremists, to the known threat of extremists linked to al-Qa'ida in Benghazi and eastern Libya, and to other recent attacks against foreign interests in Benghazi.**

The talking points in question were initially created for the House Intelligence Committee, after a briefing by then-Director of the CIA, David Petraeus.[54] Members of the Committee sought guidance on how to discuss the attacks publicly and in an unclassified manner. The CIA generated the initial drafts of the unclassified talking points and provided them to other officials within the Executive Branch for clearance. The initial CIA draft circulated to the interagency group included references to:

1. previous notifications provided to Embassy Cairo of social media reporting encouraging jihadists to break into the Embassy;
2. indications that Islamic extremists participated in the events in Benghazi;
3. potential links to Ansar al-Sharia;
4. information about CIA-produced assessments of the threat from extremists linked to al-Qa'ida in Benghazi and eastern Libya; and
5. information about five previous attacks against foreign interests in Benghazi since April 2012.[55]

When draft talking points were sent to officials throughout the Executive Branch, senior State Department officials requested the talking points be changed to avoid criticism for ignoring the threat environment in Benghazi. Specifically, State Department emails reveal senior officials had "serious concerns" about the talking points, because Members of Congress might attack the State Department for "not paying attention to Agency warnings" about the growing threat in Benghazi.[56] This process to alter the talking points can only be construed as a deliberate effort to mislead Congress and the American people.

After slight modifications were made on Friday, September 14, a senior State Department official again responded that the edits did not "resolve all my issues or those of my building leadership," and that the Department's leadership was "consulting with [National Security Staff]."[57] Several minutes later, White House officials responded by stating that the State

[54] House Intelligence Committee classified briefing with Director Petraeus, September 14, 2012.
[55] Draft talking points circulated via email within interagency at 6:52 p.m., September 14, 2012.
[56] Email from Senior State Department official to interagency team at 7:39 p m., Friday, September 14, 2012.
[57] Email from Senior State Department official to interagency team at 9:24 p m., Friday, September 14, 2012.

Department's concerns would have to be taken into account and asserted further discussion would occur the following morning at a Deputies Committee Meeting.[58]

After the Deputies Committee Meeting on Saturday, September 15, 2012, at which any interagency disagreement would be resolved by the White House,[59] a small group of officials from both the State Department and the CIA worked to modify the talking points to their final form to reflect the decision reached in the Deputies meeting.[60] The actual edits were made by a current high-ranking CIA official.[61] **Those edits struck any and all suggestions that the State Department had been previously warned of threats in the region, that there had been previous attacks in Benghazi by al-Qa'ida-linked groups in Benghazi and eastern Libya, and that extremists linked to al-Qa'ida may have participated in the attack on the Benghazi Mission.**[62] The talking points also excluded details about the wide availability of weapons and experienced fighters in Libya, an exacerbating factor that contributed to the lethality of the attacks.[63]

Administration officials have said that modification of **the talking points was an attempt to protect classified information and an investigation by the FBI**,[64] but the evidence refutes these assertions. Administration officials transmitted and reviewed different drafts of the talking points - many of which included reference to al-Qa'ida-associated groups, including Ansar al-Sharia - over unsecure email systems. Also, **there were no concerns about protecting classified information in the email traffic**. Finally, the FBI approved a version of the talking points with significantly more information about the attacks and previous threats than the version requested by the State Department. Claims that the edits were made to protect the FBI investigation are not credible.[65]

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[58] A Deputies meeting is an interagency gathering – often done in person or over a secure video conferencing system (SVTC) -- at which deputies of all relevant departments advocate for their departments' positions. Deputies typically reach a consensus, or the White House will provide a decision if there is continued dispute. In this case, the Deputies met by (SVTC) on the morning of Saturday, September 15, 2012. While Congress has not yet been given minutes of that meeting, it appears to have included representatives of the State Department, the CIA, DOD, the FBI/DOJ, and the White House, represented by National Security Staff.

[59] This appears to directly contradict White House Spokesman Jay Carney's comments at the Daily Press Briefing on November 28, 2012: "The White House and the State Department have made clear that the single adjustment that was made to those talking points by either of those two -- of these two institutions were changing the word 'consulate' to 'diplomatic facility,' because 'consulate' was inaccurate. Those talking points originated from the intelligence community. They reflect the IC's best assessments of what they thought had happened."

[60] Email to Ambassador Rice, Saturday, September 15, 2012, discussing the results of the Deputies meeting.

[61] Final version of talking points circulated at 9:52 a.m., September 15, 2012.

[62] *Id.*

[63] *Id.*

[64] CIA Acting Director Michael Morrell suggested at a hearing before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that the talking points were changed to protect an ongoing FBI investigation. See, e.g., http://www.cbsnews.com/9301-250_162-57555984/who-changed-the-benghazi-talking-points/

[65] Email from Senior State Department Official to second Senior State Department Official explaining that the FBI "did not have major concerns" with the talking points and "offered only a couple minor suggestions." 8:59 p.m., September 14, 2012.

Key Quotes

"The White House and the State Department have made clear that the single adjustment that was made to those talking points by either of those two -- of these two institutions were changing the word 'consulate' to 'diplomatic facility,' because 'consulate' was inaccurate. Those talking points originated from the intelligence community. They reflect the IC's best assessments of what they thought had happened." – *White House Spokesman Jay Carney, White House Daily Press Briefing, November 28, 2012*

"Secondly, because the process was one of declassifying classified information, and in that process the talking points that were provided to Ambassador Rice to members of Congress and to others, including myself in the executive branch, were written in the way that was presented by Ambassador Rice." – *White House Spokesman Jay Carney, White House Daily Press Briefing, January 8, 2013*

Ambassador Rice received the approved talking points in advance of her appearances on Sunday, September 16, 2012 on various television programs.[66] **She was informed that the talking points were created for Congressional members, and modified to protect State Department equities and the FBI investigation**.[67] Ambassador Rice then appeared the next morning on five Sunday morning talk shows, during which she focused on the attacks being provoked by the Cairo events and the "hateful video."

The Administration made a conscious decision to focus on the deliberately misleading and incomplete narrative that demonstrations protesting a YouTube video evolved into attacks on the Benghazi Mission. This decision resulted in a senior Administration official appearing on major national news programs to discuss a terrorist attack against the United States without mentioning the known threat to the region by al Qa'ida affiliates, the likely participation by Ansar al-Sharia in the incident, and the previous attacks on Western interests in Benghazi.

[66] Email to Ambassador Rice, Saturday, September 15, 2012.
[67] *Id.*

IV. The Administration's investigations and reviews of the Benghazi attacks highlight its failed security policies leading to the attacks while undermining the ability of the United States government to bring the perpetrators to justice.

A Compromised FBI Criminal Investigation

The Administration responded to the Benghazi attacks with an FBI investigation, as opposed to a more thorough military or intelligence response. Regrettably, the FBI simply did not have the ability to access the location of the attacks with sufficient speed to ensure that all evidence was accumulated as quickly as possible. Due to security concerns and bureaucratic entanglements among the Departments of Justice, State, and Defense,[68] the FBI team investigating the terrorist attacks did not access the crime scene until more than three weeks later, on October 4, 2012. During this time, the site was not secured, and curious locals and international media were able to pick through the burned-out remains of the U.S. facility. The FBI spent less than one day collecting evidence at the Benghazi Mission. FBI officials indicated that the security situation delayed and deterred a more thorough investigation of the site.

The FBI has interviewed all U.S. Government personnel on the ground during the attacks, but has encountered difficulty accessing other witnesses or suspects. For example, one suspect jailed in connection with the attacks, Ali Harzi, was released for lack of evidence on January 7, 2013, by Tunisian authorities. FBI agents questioned Mr. Harzi in December 2012, but the questioning did not result in sufficient information for the FBI to stop his release. Media reports also indicate that the FBI has recently been given access to question an individual of interest, Faraj al-Shibli, in Libya. The scope of that questioning is currently unconfirmed, and it remains unclear whether the access is sufficient enough to yield evidence that could be used to prosecute Shibli or other individuals.

FBI Director Robert Mueller testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) that the investigation is complicated by the lack of security in eastern Libya.[69] Without significant progress in finding and questioning suspects, it appears that the decision to proceed with an FBI investigation – presumably with the intention of obtaining a criminal indictment in U.S. courts – was ill-advised. For instance, the United States responded to the attacks against U.S. embassies in Africa in the 1990s and against the U.S.S. Cole in 2000 with criminal investigations. On their own, those investigations failed to bring many of those responsible to justice and likely encouraged further terrorist activity. This approach is not the most effective method of responding to terrorist attacks against U.S. interests in foreign countries.

It was only after the September 11, 2001 attacks, when the United States responded to terrorism with military force, that the government successfully brought some of the perpetrators of those attacks and the previous attacks to justice. Terrorists who successfully attack U.S.

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[68] The Department of Defense offered to provide a U.S. military security team to accompany the FBI team. This option was not pursued.

[69] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, World Wide Threats Hearing, March 13, 2013.

interests are not deterred by criminal investigations. Because members of terrorist organizations that attack U.S. interests around the world are conducting more than a crime, they must be responded to accordingly to be thwarted.

The Administration's decision to respond to the terrorist attacks with an FBI criminal investigation did a public disservice in two ways. First, it prevented the American public from fully understanding the motivation of the terrorist attacks and the ongoing nature of the threat against U.S. interests in the region. Second, by using a compromised criminal investigation as a justification to initially withhold significant information, it skewed the public's perception and understanding of the events before, during, and after the terrorist attacks, thereby eroding public trust and confidence in the information the Administration did eventually share and release in the aftermath.

An Inadequate State Department Accountability Review Board Process

The State Department's Accountability Review Board (ARB) highlights the "systemic failures" of Washington, D.C.-based decision-makers that left the Benghazi Mission with significant security shortfalls. Yet, the Board also failed to conduct an appropriately thorough and independent review of which officials bear responsibility for those decisions.

After Secretary Clinton determined that the attacks that led to the deaths of Ambassador Stevens, Information Officer Sean Smith, and U.S. security personnel, and former U.S. Navy SEALs, Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods on September 11, 2012, involved loss of life at or related to a U.S. mission abroad,[70] she convened an Accountability Review Board, headed by Thomas Pickering, a retired U.S. ambassador, to examine the facts and circumstances of the attacks and to report findings and recommendations.[71]

The ARB made several findings that are consistent with facts uncovered in the Committees' ongoing investigations:

1. there was no protest prior to the attack, which was "unanticipated" in "scale and intensity";
2. there was a "pervasive realization among personnel who served in Benghazi that the Special Mission was not a high priority for Washington when it came to security-related requests"; and
3. regarding the Special Mission's security posture, there was an inadequate number of DS staff in Benghazi on the day of the attack. [do we mean "was" or "was not?]

[70] "Convening of an Accountability Review Board To Examine the Circumstances Surrounding the Deaths of Personnel Assigned in Support of the U.S. Government Mission to Libya in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012," Notice by the Department of State, Federal Register, October 4, 2012, available at https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/10/04/2012-24504/convening-of-an-accountability-review-board-to-examine-the-circumstances-surrounding-the-deaths-of.
[71] *Id.*

A number of the ARB findings, however, are inconsistent with facts uncovered by the Committees and appear to incorrectly place or imply blame for the attacks:

- The Board determined "systemic failures" in Washington, D.C. led to decisions that left the Benghazi Mission with significant security shortfalls. Specifically, the Board found key leadership failures in the Diplomatic Security (DS) Bureau as well as in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) which led to confusion over decision-making in relation to security and policy in Benghazi. These factors likely contributed to the insufficient priority given to the Benghazi Mission's security-related requests. The Board's finding regarding the security decisions in Benghazi, however, was limited to Diplomatic Security professionals and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. **The Committees' review shows that the leadership failure in relation to security and policy in Benghazi extended to the highest levels of the State Department, including Secretary Clinton.**

- The Board attempted to shift blame to Congress, asserting Congress "must do its part ... and provide necessary resources to the State Department to address security risks and meet mission imperatives." This finding implies that a lack of appropriations from Congress led to the security decisions in Benghazi. **Under direct questioning from Members of Congress, State Department personnel have testified that funding was not a reason for the drawdown of security levels in Benghazi**.[72]

- The **Board determined there was no breach of duty by any single U.S. Government employee,** citing legal limits on the definition of breach of duty. The Committees find the Board's determination in the area of disciplinary action especially unsatisfactory, as the Board ascertained the gross mismanagement among senior leadership at the State Department contributed to the inadequate security for the Benghazi Mission.[73] **The House Foreign Affairs Committee expects to consider anticipated legislation to provide future Accountability Review Boards with the authority to recommend disciplinary action against a State Department employee when misconduct or unsatisfactory performance leads to a security incident.**

- The Board also determined the security systems and procedures in place were implemented properly. The Committees are deeply concerned with this determination as extensive oversight work uncovered repeated failures by senior State Department officials to support the U.S. Mission in Libya's security requests, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that such security was needed.

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[72] Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security Charlene Lamb before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, October 10, 2012; email exchange between Assistant Secretary Eric Boswell and Diplomatic Security Chief Financial Officer Robert Baldre, September 28, 2012 ("I do not feel that we have ever been at a point where we sacrificed security due to a lack of funding...Typically Congress has provided sufficient funding.")

[73] Department of State, Accountability Review Board for Benghazi Attack of September 2012, Dec. 19, 2012, p. 4.

- The Board echoed other Administration attempts to lay blame for the Benghazi attacks at the feet of the Intelligence Community (IC) by highlighting that U.S. intelligence provided no immediate and specific warning of the attack. A Congressional review of the facts reveals that, while the IC had no awareness of an imminent attack on the TMF in Benghazi, the **IC provided State Department officials and others countless reports on the deteriorating security situation in Benghazi and the risks faced by U.S. diplomatic personnel**.

Analysis of the Accountability Review Board

While the work of the ARB provides some insight into the decisions leading up to the attacks, its report fundamentally fails to satisfy its legislative mandate to conduct a thorough review of accountability within the State Department.

While Secretary Hillary Clinton claimed she accepted "responsibility" for Benghazi, the Committees remain concerned that the ARB neglected to directly examine the role that she and her Deputy Secretaries played in overseeing the gross mismanagement or the "systemic failures" within the Department. The Committees note the Board has failed to provide a satisfactory explanation as to why it did not interview Secretary Clinton or her Deputies. In a similar vein, it is unclear why the ARB report made no reference to Under Secretary Patrick Kennedy's decision to withdraw a SST from Libya, despite multiple warnings from Ambassador Stevens of a deteriorating security environment. The ARB's complete omission of the roles played by these individuals undermines the credibility of its findings and recommendations.

The Committees have determined that this Accountability Review Board was staffed by current and former State Department employees. The Board's reluctance to undertake a more comprehensive investigation, and to make more forceful recommendations, may have stemmed from the fact that the State Department's decisions and actions were investigated internally, undermining public confidence that the review was objective and conducted by individuals free from institutional bias. The current "in-house orientation" of an ARB may have provided a built-in motivation or prejudice, even for the best-intentioned investigators, to deflect blame and to avoid holding specific individuals accountable, especially superiors. The House Foreign Affairs Committee will soon introduce legislation to increase the ARB's independence and objectivity. Although the report did provide some helpful recommendations regarding various State Department procedures, the Committees conclude it stopped well short of a full review of the policymakers, policies, and decisions that created the inadequate security situation that existed at the Benghazi Mission on September 11, 2012.

V. The Benghazi attacks revealed fundamental flaws in the Administration's approach to securing U.S. interests and personnel around the world.

U.S. personnel on the ground in Benghazi on September 11, 2012 responded bravely and honorably, using all resources available to defend themselves and their colleagues against dozens of armed militants. The Committees' review of the attacks against U.S. interests revealed several policy failures that deserve attention and remediation if the United States hopes to avoid further catastrophes like that day.

First, the attacks revealed the United States' poor defensive posture in North Africa and the Near East. The Committees are concerned that the Administration positioned the nation's military assets in the region and established force protection requirements for U.S. personnel in Libya based, in large part, on the absence of specific, tactical intelligence warnings of an imminent attack on U.S. facilities in Benghazi. This decision did not properly account for the generalized threat posed by al-Qa'ida-affiliated groups and other extremists, the many attacks that had already occurred in and around Benghazi, or the dynamic and evolving nature of these groups.

The attack also demonstrated the limitations of the U.S. military capability and capacity to respond to "Benghazi-style" attacks in the region. The strategic posture of U.S. AFRICOM requires continued focus and oversight. While the Defense Department contends that a dedicated AFRICOM special operations force could not have arrived in time to assist the efforts on the ground in Benghazi, the force's response time would have been dependent on the precise position of those assets and whether enablers were immediately available to such a force. There is a critical link between U.S. forward presence in Europe and the military's ability to respond to contingencies in Northern Africa in particular, and the broader Middle East, in general. Additional cuts to U.S. force posture within EUCOM will likely undermine AFRICOM's ability to conduct operations on the continent.[74]

Second, **the Administration failed to acknowledge a deteriorating security environment and respond to the extensive body of intelligence reporting that did exist**. The IC collected considerable information about the threats in the region, and disseminated regular assessments warning of the deteriorating security environment in Benghazi, evidenced by previous events targeting American interests, facilities, and personnel. Despite ample warning, the Administration simply failed to provide adequate security arrangements to reflect the level of known risk and threats faced by U.S. personnel in the region. Moreover, in response to the intelligence available and in anticipation that a terrorist attack could occur on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the military apparently raised its force protection levels at regional military installations. But the military did not increase its readiness or posture

[74] Testimony from EUCOM Commander, Admiral Stavridis, March 15, 2013, before the Armed Services Committee, "They [bases in Europe] are the forward operating bases for 21st century security. They allow us to support Carter Ham in Africa. They allow us to support Jim Mattis in the Levant, in the near Middle East, and indeed in Central Asia. So geography matters as well."

assets to respond to unforeseen events. The Administration's lack of sufficient consideration of the broader security and political context continues to lend doubt to the U.S. Government's ability to respond to, or prevent, the next attack on U.S. assets and interests in Libya and the region.

Third, the attacks highlight the failure of the Administration to properly plan for the post-Gadhafi environment. After the U.S.-backed Libyan revolution resulted in the end of the Gadhafi regime, the Administration failed to provide sufficient U.S. security elements to protect U.S. interests on the ground. Despite repeated requests for further security by U.S. officials working in the high-risk, high-threat environment, requests were denied by senior leadership at the State Department. Moreover, the Administration does not have a clear policy that defines U.S. interests or a strategy designed to comprehensively secure U.S. interests in the region and achieve U.S. policy goals. Thus, the Administration was willing to provide necessary force to expel Gadhafi in support of the Libyan opposition, yet it simply failed to provide sufficient protection for the U.S. personnel and interests that remained.

Fourth, the events after the attacks present similar concerns. The FBI was seriously hamstrung in its ability to quickly access the Benghazi site, and its investigation and interview of key witnesses were too slow. The Administration did not ensure adequate security for a swift, thorough, and accurate FBI investigation. It should have considered deploying other non-civilian agencies to perform the mission. A civilian investigative team is not the most effective resource to investigate a national security attack in an unstable region with inadequate security.

Fifth, the Administration perpetuated a deliberately misleading and incomplete narrative that the attacks evolved from a political demonstration by minimizing the role played by al-Qa'ida-affiliated entities and other groups. White House officials directed that talking points be changed to protect the reputation of the State Department, highlighting the overall desire to dismiss the continued threat posed by al-Qa'ida-affiliated and other extremist groups in the region. Specifically, the facts reveal that the talking points were modified to remove references to likely participation by Islamic extremists. They were also altered to remove references to the threat of extremists linked to al-Qa'ida in Benghazi and eastern Libya, including information about at least five other attacks against foreign interests in Benghazi by unidentified assailants, including a June 2012 attack against the British Ambassador's convoy. It is clear that the State Department expressed concerns – and was backed by the White House – that the information be removed to avoid criticism for ignoring the general threat environment in Benghazi.

In sum, the events in Benghazi thus reflect this Administration's lack of a comprehensive national security strategy or effective defense posture in the region. **This singular event will be repeated unless the United States recognizes and responds to the threats faced around the world, and properly positions resources and security assets to reflect those threats.** Until that time, the United States will remain in a reactionary mode and should expect many more

situations like Benghazi, where those on the ground act bravely, but the United States simply fails to provide the resources for an adequate response. Ultimately, those opposed to U.S. interests will continue to take advantage of perceived U.S. weakness, the United States will continue to lose credibility with our allies, and we will face the worst of all possible outcomes in strategically important locations around the world.

Congress must maintain pressure on the Administration to ensure that the United States takes all necessary steps to find the Benghazi attackers. Congress will also articulate to the American people the true nature of the threats faced around the world, and advocate for a more robust and proper defense posture for the United States. The Committees expect the Administration to fully comply with all current and future document requests about the attacks, and the Committees will continue reviewing several outstanding questions detailed below.

In light of the facts and unanswered questions documented in this progress report, the House Armed Services Committee will continue to review:

- The U.S. government's assumptions and risk analysis – as reflected in the U.S. military and State Department posture in Libya and the region – given the historic importance and activities of extremists and al-Qa'ida-associated groups in Libya;
- The precise nature of the intelligence, if any, that was lost by the failure of U.S. officials to gain quick access to the U.S. facilities in Benghazi after the attacks;
- U.S. policymakers' assumptions about al-Qa'ida, the global jihad, and the use of applying U.S. military resources to weak states, ungoverned spaces, and insecure contexts;
- The 1) operational capability, 2) resourcing, 3) readiness, and 4) intelligence collection and analysis of our forces in light of the Benghazi attacks;
- The implications of the events in Benghazi for conventional forces', the Fleet Anti-Terrorism Forces' (FAST), and special operations forces' training, readiness, resourcing, and posture;
- The U.S. Africa Command's Commander in-Extremis Force (CIF) for fully operational capability and posture; and
- The intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability, capacity, and requirements analysis of our forces in light of the Benghazi attacks.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee will continue to review:

- The ARB process and the need to create a more independent review body with greater ability to make disciplinary recommendations;
- The responsibility of senior State Department officials for the failure to provide proper security prior to the Benghazi attacks;

- Needed improvements in embassy security; and
- The State Department's alertness to the overall political climate and resultant terrorist threats in high-risk environments.

The House Judiciary Committee will continue to review:

- The Administration's decision to respond to the attacks with an FBI investigation;
- The U.S. government's access to specific detainees and potential suspects; and
- The status of the FBI investigation.

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee will continue to review:

- Interagency coordination, information sharing, and decision making leading up to, during, and after the attacks in Benghazi, particularly with a view toward both preventing and improving the response to similar attacks in the future;
- The Administration's lack of transparency and accountability, including providing misleading information to the public and Congress;
- The inadequacy of the Administration's investigation of the attacks, including the decision to treat the attacks as a law enforcement matter and the shortcomings of the Accountability Review Board;
- The Administration's treatment of personnel and whistleblowers following the attack on Benghazi; and
- Any new or outstanding issues raised by whistleblowers.
- The Committee will also amplify and support the efforts of other Committees, as requested.

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence will continue to review:

- The IC's success at identifying and tracking the attackers;
- The IC's information sharing among agencies and the incorporation of on-the-ground information into formal intelligence channels to better allow analysts to review such information in a timely fashion; and
- The value of on-the-ground reporting versus other intelligence reporting in a crisis.

Appendix I: Oversight Activities by Committee

The Committees have thus far reviewed tens of thousands of documents, including agency and White House emails, intelligence reporting, summaries of FBI interviews, classified and unclassified cables, and the various versions of the talking points created for HPSCI and used by Ambassador Susan Rice. They have also spoken with dozens of government officials in both interviews and open testimony. As the Committees' reviews are ongoing, they expect full cooperation and compliance by the Administration with all past and future document and interview requests.

House Armed Services Committee:

- Systematic monitoring of intelligence traffic and multiple secure calls with DoD.
- HASC staff briefings and discussions with outside experts.
- HASC Chairman formal letters of inquiry to:
  - President Barack Obama
  - General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
  - Vice Admiral Kurt Tidd, Director of Operations, The Joint Staff
  - Lieutenant General Flynn, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency
  - General Carter Ham, Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)
  - Admiral William McRaven, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM)
- September 12, 2012: Staff classified briefing on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Libya.
- September 19, 2012: Full Committee hearing on the attack in Benghazi.
- October 18, 2012: Staff classified briefing on intelligence and operations related to the attack in Benghazi.
- October 29, 2012: Chairman letter to the President.
- November 20, 2012: Staff classified briefing on intelligence and operations related to the attack in Benghazi.
- November 16, 2012: Staff participated in DoD briefing to House Members.
- November 29, 2012: Full Committee, Members only, briefing on the attack in Benghazi.
- February 6, 2013: Full Committee briefing on intelligence and operations related to North and East Africa.

- March 15, 2013: Full Committee hearing on the posture of U.S. EUCOM and U.S. AFRICOM.

House Foreign Affairs Committee:

- HFAC sent six letters – individually and collaboratively with sister Committees – requesting documents and information from the State Department. Obtained a public commitment by Secretary Kerry to reassess the restricted manner by which documents have been provided to the Committee.
- Reviewed thousands of pages of documents and information produced by the State Department pursuant to this investigation. It has interviewed State Department and DoD personnel.
- Approached a DS agent who was on the scene in a not-yet-successful effort to obtain additional information. This individual wishes to remain anonymous.
- Building on its Benghazi investigation, the Committee is taking a broader look at embassy security to determine whether the State Department is adequately protecting its personnel at other diplomatic facilities. Improving embassy security is a Committee legislative priority. The Committee is particularly concerned about, and is currently investigating, the security situation at the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan.
- November 14, 2012: Classified briefing for Committee Members and cleared staff.
- November 15, 2012: Full Committee hearing with private experts entitled, "Benghazi and Beyond: What Went Wrong on September 11, 2012 and How to Prevent it from Happening at other Frontline Posts, Part I."
- December 19, 2012: Classified briefing for Committee Members and cleared staff with Ambassador Pickering and Admiral Mullen, Chair and Vice Chair of the Accountability Review Board.
- December 20, 2012: Full Committee hearing with State Department Deputy Secretaries Burns and Nides entitled, "Benghazi Attack, Part II: The Accountability Review Board Report."
- January 23, 2013: Full Committee hearing with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton entitled, "Terrorist Attack in Benghazi: The Secretary of State's View." (Committee Members submitted more than 100 Questions For the Record and have received responses to nearly all.)

House Judiciary Committee:

- Following the September 11, 2012, Benghazi, Libya terrorist attack, House Judiciary Committee staff and members received classified briefings from IC components, including the FBI.

House Committee on Government and Oversight Reform

- September 20, 2012: Letter from National Security Subcommittee Chairman Jason Chaffetz to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton requesting documents and information related to the Benghazi attacks and Libya-related security decisions.
- September 27, 2012: Staff interview of Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Wood, former commander of the Site Security Team at Embassy Tripoli.
- October 1, 2012: House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa and Chairman Chaffetz interview Eric Nordstrom, former Regional Security Officer at Embassy Tripoli.
- October 2, 2012: Letter from Chairmen Issa and Chaffetz to Secretary Clinton requesting information about the State Department's awareness of the deteriorating security environment in Libya.
- October 6, 2012: Chairman Chaffetz travels to Stuttgart, Germany to meet with General Carter Ham, Commanding Officer, U.S. Africa Command.
- October 7, 2012: Chairman Chaffetz travels to Tripoli, Libya to meet with Embassy leadership.
- October 9, 2012: Transcribed interview of David Oliveira, former Assistant Regional Security Officer at the Benghazi Special Mission Compound.
- October 9, 2012: Transcribed interview of Charlene Lamb, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Programs, Bureau of Diplomatic Security.
- October 10, 2012: Full Committee hearing entitled "The Security Failures of Benghazi."
- October 19, 2012: Letter from Chairmen Issa and Chaffetz to President Obama requesting information about White House involvement in Libya-related security decisions.
- October 25, 2012: Transcribed interview of Erfana Dar, former Special Assistant to Under Secretary of State for Management Patrick Kennedy.

- October 29, 2012: Letter from Chairmen Issa and Chaffetz to Secretary Clinton requesting information about any investigations conducted by the Department or the Government of Libya in response to the April 6, 2012 and June 6, 2012 bombings of the Benghazi Special Mission Compound.
- November 1, 2012: Letter from Chairmen Issa and Chaffetz to Secretary Clinton requesting documents and information related to media reports about pre-attack surveillance of the Benghazi Special Mission Compound.
- November 16, 2012: Letter from Chairmen Issa and Chaffetz to Secretary Clinton reiterating the Committee's unfulfilled request for documents and information related to the Benghazi attacks.
- November 20, 2012: Letter from Chairmen Issa and Chaffetz to Acting CIA Director Michael Morrell requesting an official, unclassified timeline of CIA actions in response to the Benghazi attacks.
- November 26, 2012: Letter from Chairmen Issa and Chaffetz to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta requesting information about the U.S. military response to the Benghazi attacks.
- December 13, 2012: Classified briefing by the Defense Department on actions taken in response to the Benghazi attacks.
- January 12, 2013: Chairman Issa travels to Rota, Spain to meet with military personnel sent to reinforce security at Embassy Tripoli immediately following the attacks in Benghazi.
- January 28, 2013: Joint letter from House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce and Chairmen Issa and Chaffetz to Secretary Clinton requesting access to all documents reviewed by, and the names of all individuals interviewed by, the Accountability Review Board.
- March 15, 2013: Members of the Committee receive a classified briefing from General Ham.
- The Committee has reviewed over 25,000 pages of classified and unclassified documents made available by the State Department.
- The Committee has heard from, and continues to hear from, multiple individuals with direct and/or indirect information about events surrounding the attacks in Benghazi.

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

- Requested, received, and reviewed thousands of pages of documents, including emails, cables, and classified intelligence assessments. These documents contain various drafts of the talking points created for HPSCI and used by Ambassador Rice, and emails from Administration officials, including those from White House officials, related to the creation of those talking points. The Committee continues to submit questions for the record and receive documents from the IC on an ongoing basis.
- September 13, 2012: Full Committee classified roundtable discussion with NCTC Director Olsen.
- September 14, 2012: Full Committee classified roundtable discussion with Director of CIA, David H. Petraeus.
- November 15, 2012: Full Committee classified hearing on Benghazi attacks with officials from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), CIA, NCTC, DoD, FBI, and State.
- November 16, 2012: Full Committee classified hearing on Benghazi Attacks with former Director of CIA Petraeus.
- December 13, 2012: Full Committee classified hearing on efforts to find the Benghazi terrorists.
- March 19, 2013: Full Committee classified briefing led by ODNI General Counsel Bob Litt to discuss Benghazi talking points.
- The Committee staff conducted numerous staff meetings and maintains a running list of questions for the record.
- HPSCI Chairman Rogers sent a letter to Acting CIA Director Morell raising his concerns about information sharing and analytic issues uncovered to date.

Appendix II: Consolidated Timeline of Events

March-October 2011

The Libyan revolution was supported by the United States most directly in the form of NATO air operations, which lasted from March through October of 2011.

Tuesday, December 27, 2011

A State Department memorandum circulated at the end of 2011 recommended that U.S. personnel remain in Benghazi. It explained that many Libyans were "strongly" in favor of a U.S. outpost in Benghazi, in part because they believed a U.S. presence in eastern Libya would ensure that the new Tripoli-based government fairly considered eastern interests.

Wednesday, March 28, 2012

Ambassador Cretz sent a cable to Secretary Clinton requesting additional security assets. Specifically, he asked for the continued deployment of both Mobile Security Detachment (MSD) teams, or at least additional DS agents to replace them, as well as the full five DS agents which the December 2011 memorandum claimed would be stationed in Benghazi.

Friday, April 6, 2012

The Temporary Mission Facility (TMF) in Benghazi came under attack when disgruntled Libyan contract guards allegedly threw a small improvised explosive device (IED) over the perimeter wall. No casualties were reported.

Thursday, April 19, 2012

State responded to Ambassador Cretz's request for additional security assets. The cable response to Tripoli bears Secretary Clinton's signature, and specifically acknowledges Ambassador Cretz's March 28 request for additional security. Despite the Ambassador's March request, the April cable from Clinton stipulates that the plan to drawdown security assets will proceed as planned. The cable further recommends that State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the U.S Mission in Libya conduct a "joint re-assessment of the number of DS agents requested for Benghazi."

Wednesday, June 6, 2012

The TMF was attacked again by unknown assailants who used an IED powerful enough to blow a hole in the perimeter wall. Again, no casualties were reported.

Thursday, June 7, 2012

Ambassador Stevens made a personal plea for an increase in security. In a June 2012 email, he told a Department official that with national elections in July and August, the Mission "would feel much safer if we could keep two MSD teams with us through this period [to support] our staff and [personal detail] for me and the [Deputy Chief of Mission] and any VIP visitors." The

Department official replied that due to other commitments and limited resources, "unfortunately, MSD cannot support the request."

Monday, July 9, 2012

A July 2012 cable from Ambassador Stevens stressed that security conditions in Libya had not met the requisite benchmarks established by the Department and the U.S. Mission in Libya to initiate a security drawdown, and requested that security personnel, including the MSD teams, be permitted to stay. After being apprised of this pending request, Deputy Assistant Secretary Charlene Lamb exclaimed: "NO I do not [I repeat] not want them to ask for the MSD team to stay!" The MSD team was withdrawn, though it is unclear whether the Department ever formally rejected the Ambassador's July request.

Monday, June 11, 2012

Britain's ambassador to Libya was in a convoy of cars attacked in the eastern city of Benghazi. The convoy was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). Two protection officers were injured.

Monday, August 27, 2012

U.S. officials were aware that Libya remained volatile. They were particularly concerned with the numerous armed militias that operated freely throughout the country. In August 2011, the State Department warned U.S. citizens against traveling to Libya, explaining that "inter-militia conflict can erupt at any time or any place."

- The security environment in Benghazi was similarly deteriorating throughout 2012. From June 2011 to July 2012, then-Regional Security Officer (RSO) for Libya Eric Nordstrom, the principal security adviser to the U.S. Ambassador to Libya, compiled a list of over 200 security incidents in Libya, 50 of which took place in Benghazi. These included violent acts directed against diplomats and diplomatic facilities, international organizations, and third-country nationals, as well as large-scale militia clashes.
- In spite of these mounting security concerns, for most of 2012 the Benghazi Mission was forced to rely on fewer than the approved number of DS agents. Specifically, while the State Department memorandum signed by Under Secretary Kennedy claimed that five agents would be provided, this was only the case for 23 days in 2012. Reports indicate the Benghazi Mission was typically staffed with only three agents, and sometimes as few as one or two.

Monday, September 10, 2012

Ambassador Stevens travelled to Benghazi on September 10, 2012, both to fill staffing gaps between principal officers in Benghazi, and to allow the Ambassador to reconnect with local contacts. There were also plans for him to attend the establishment of a new American Corner at a local Benghazi school.

SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK TIMELINE

Tuesday, September 11, 2012

All times are Eastern European Time (EET, Benghazi)

~9:42 p.m. The attack begins at the TMF in Benghazi. Dozens of lightly armed men approached the TMF, quickly and deliberately breached the front gate, and set fire to the guard house and main diplomatic building. The attackers included members of Libya-based Ansar al-Sharia (AAS) and al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), among other groups. A State Department officer in the TMF's Tactical Operations Center immediately put out calls for help to the TMF Annex -- another facility for U.S. officials -- the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, and State Department Headquarters in Washington, DC. At the time of the attack, Ambassador Stevens, Sean Smith, the information management officer, and one of the five Diplomatic Security (DS) officers were located in Villa C, the main building of the TMF. (DoD timeline/pg. 11)

9:59 p.m. An unarmed, unmanned, surveillance aircraft is directed to reposition overhead the Benghazi facility. (DoD timeline)

~10:02 p.m. Within 20-minutes of the attack, Stevens, Smith, and the DS officer suffered effects from smoke inhalation inside the main diplomatic building and tried to escape by crawling along the floor towards a window. The DS officer unknowingly lost touch with Ambassador Stevens and Mr. Smith somewhere along the smoke-filled escape route. After crawling out of a window and realizing that Ambassador Stevens and Mr. Smith were not with him, the DS officer, under gunfire, repeatedly re-entered the burning building to search for them. The DS officer used his radio to call for help. Security officers from other parts of the TMF complex responded and supported the DS officer's search for the missing individuals. (pg. 11)

10:05 p.m. In an "Ops Alert" issued shortly after the attack began, the State Department Operations Center notified senior Department Officials, the White House Situation Room, and others, that the Benghazi compound was under attack and that "approximately 20 armed people fired shots; explosions have been heard as well."

~10:07 p.m. A U.S. security team departed the Annex for the TMF. The security team tried to secure heavy weapons from militia members encountered along the route, and

faced some resistance in getting to the TMF. Even in the face of those obstacles, the Annex security team arrived, under enemy fire, within 25 minutes of the beginning of the initial assault. Over the course of the following hour, the Annex security team joined the TMF security officers in searching for Ambassador Stevens and Mr. Smith. Together, they repelled sporadic gunfire and RPG fire and assembled all other U.S. personnel at the facility. Officers retrieved the body of Mr. Smith, but did not find Ambassador Stevens.

10:32 p.m. The National Military Command Center at the Pentagon, after receiving initial reports of the incident from the State Department, notifies the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. The information is quickly passed to Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey. (DoD timeline)

11:00 p.m. Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey attend a previously scheduled meeting with the President at the White House. The leaders discuss potential responses to the emerging situation. (DoD timeline)

11:10 p.m. The diverted surveillance aircraft arrives on station over the Benghazi facility. (DoD timeline)

~11:15 p.m. After about 90 minutes of repeated attempts to go into the burning building to search for the Ambassador, the Annex security team assessed that the security situation was deteriorating and they could not continue their search. The Annex security team loaded all U.S. personnel into two vehicles and departed the TMF for the Annex. The exiting vehicles left under heavy gunfire and faced at least one roadblock in their route to the Annex. The first vehicle left around 11:15 p.m. and the second vehicle departed at about 11:30 p.m. <u>All surviving American personnel departed the facility by 11:30 p.m.</u>

<u>Wednesday, September 12, 2012</u>

12:06 p.m. In a second "Ops Alert" the State Department Operations Center reported that al-Qaeda linked Ansar al-Sharia claimed responsibility for the attack and had called for an attack on Embassy Tripoli

12:00-2:00 a.m. Secretary Panetta convenes a series of meetings in the Pentagon with senior officials including General Dempsey and General Ham. They discuss additional response options for Benghazi and for the potential outbreak of further violence throughout the region, particularly in Tunis, Tripoli, Cairo, and Sana'a. During these meetings, Secretary Panetta authorizes:

- A Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST) platoon, stationed in Rota, Spain, to prepare to deploy to Benghazi, and a second FAST platoon, also stationed in Rota, Spain, to prepare to deploy to the Embassy in Tripoli.
- A EUCOM special operations force, which is training in Central Europe, to prepare to deploy to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.
- A special operations force based in the United States to prepare to deploy to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.

During this period, actions are verbally conveyed from the Pentagon to the affected Combatant Commands in order to expedite movement of forces upon receipt of formal authorization.

12:30 a.m. A seven-man security team from U.S. Embassy Tripoli, including two DoD personnel, departs for Benghazi.

~1:15 a.m. The American security team from Tripoli lands in Benghazi. (DoD timeline)

2:30 a.m. The National Military Command Center conducts a Benghazi Conference Call with representatives from AFRICOM, EUCOM, CENTCOM, TRANSCOM, SOCOM, and the four services.

2:39 a.m. As ordered by Secretary Panetta, the National Military Command Center transmits formal authorization for the two FAST platoons, and associated equipment, to prepare to deploy and for the EUCOM special operations force, and associated equipment, to move to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.

2:53 a.m. As ordered by Secretary Panetta, the National Military Command Center transmits formal authorization to deploy a special operations force, and associated equipment, from the United States to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.

5:00 a.m. A second, unmanned, unarmed surveillance aircraft is directed to relieve the initial asset still over Benghazi.

5:15 a.m. At around 5:15 a.m., within 15 minutes of the Tripoli team's arrival at the Annex from the airport, a short but deadly coordinated terrorist attack began at the Annex. The attack, which included small arms, rocket-propelled grenade (RPG),

and well-aimed mortar fire, killed two American security officers, and severely wounded two others.

6:05 a.m. AFRICOM orders a C-17 aircraft in Germany to prepare to deploy to Libya to evacuate Americans.

7:40 a.m. The first wave of American personnel depart Benghazi for Tripoli via airplane. (DoD timeline)

10:00 a.m. The second wave of Americans, including the fallen, depart Benghazi for Tripoli via airplane.

2:15 p.m. The C-17 departs Germany en route to Tripoli to evacuate Americans.

7:17 p.m. The C-17 departs Tripoli en route Ramstein, Germany with the American personnel and the remains of Mr. Sean Smith, Mr. Tyrone Woods, and Mr. Glen Doherty.

7:57 p.m. The EUCOM special operations force, and associated equipment, arrives at an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.

8:56 p.m. The FAST platoon, and associated equipment, arrives in Tripoli.

9:28 p.m. The special operations force deployed from the United States, and associated equipment, arrives at an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.

10:19 p.m. The C-17 arrives in Ramstein, Germany.

END OF SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK TIMELINE

Wednesday, September 12, 2012

- FBI formally opens an investigation into the deaths of Ambassador Sevens and the three other Americans killed in the attack.
- Relying on analytical intuition with limited reporting on September 12, 2012, IC analysts correctly evaluated soon after the attacks that the event was a terrorist attack against a U.S. facility, likely conducted by Islamic extremists.

Thursday, September 13, 2012

Beginning on September 13, 2012, analysts began receiving and relying on a larger volume of diverse intelligence reporting that referenced protests and demonstrations in Benghazi. Analysts

revised their assessments again to determine finally that the attack was deliberate and that a protest was not occurring at the time of the attack. The IC's modification of its assessments reflects the reasonable evolution of tactical intelligence analysis.

Saturday, September 15, 2012

HPSCI staff received the IC talking points on the Benghazi attack.

Sunday, September 16, 2012

On Sunday, September 16, 2012, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice appeared on five morning talk shows to discuss the Administration's account of the attack. In nearly identical statements, she stated that the attack was a spontaneous protest in response to a "hateful video."

Wednesday, September 19, 2012

The National Counterterrorism Center Director testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee that our diplomats died "in the course of a terrorist attack on our embassy." This testimony marked a significant shift in the Administration's rhetoric.

Thursday, September 20, 2012

After Director of NCTC's testimony, Administration officials began referring to the event as a terrorist attack. On September 20, 2012, Jay Carney stated that, "it is, I think, self-evident that what happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack."

Friday, September 21, 2012

Secretary Clinton stated that, "What happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack, and we will not rest until we have tracked down and brought to justice the terrorists who murdered four Americans."

Thursday, October 4, 2012

- Due to security concerns and bureaucratic entanglements among the Departments of Justice, State, and Defense, the FBI team investigating the terrorist attack did not access the crime scene until more than three weeks later, on October 4, 2012. The FBI spent less than one day collecting evidence at the TMF. FBI officials indicated that the security situation delayed and undermined a more thorough investigation of the site.
- Secretary Clinton convened an Accountability Review Board (ARB), headed by Thomas Pickering, a retired U.S. ambassador, to examine the facts and circumstances of the attacks and to report findings and recommendations.

Tuesday, October, 9, 2012

The State Department held a conference call briefing for reporters in which the Department publicly acknowledged that there had been no protest outside the Benghazi diplomatic facility prior to the assault. State Department officials would testify before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee the next day.

Tuesday, November 27, 2012

Administration officials have blamed their initial statements on "evolving" intelligence reports. To that end, Ambassador Rice stated on November 27, 2012, that Acting CIA Director Michael Morell "explained that the talking points provided by the intelligence community, and the initial assessment upon which they were based, were incorrect in a key respect: there was no protest or demonstration in Benghazi."