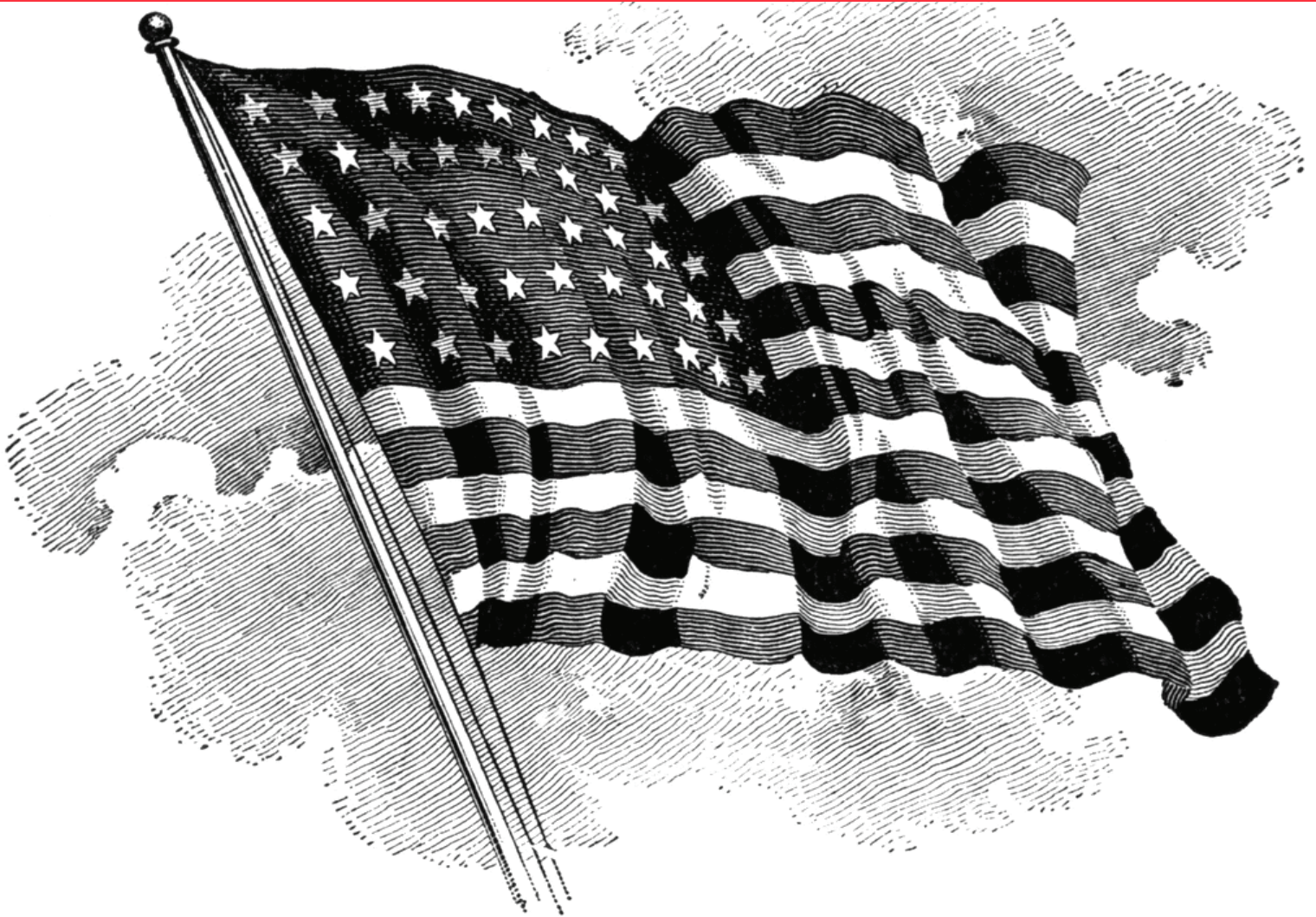




*ACCURACY IN MEDIA, INC.*



## **Citizens' Commission on Benghazi**

### **Betrayal in Benghazi: A Dereliction of Duty**

June 29, 2016 Report

**Citizens’ Commission on Benghazi**  
**June 29, 2016**

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## Foreword

When we at Accuracy in Media decided to form the Citizens' Commission on Benghazi (CCB) to independently investigate the full set of circumstances surrounding the attacks in Benghazi on September 11, 2012, that killed four Americans, we had no idea what the journey would be like. After initially reaching out to several retired senior military officers, who all immediately said, 'Yes,' we continued, with their help, to assemble an all-star team of people whom we believed had the wisdom, experience, contacts and integrity to help Americans learn the truth about what happened there.

AIM has been involved in numerous stories involving America's national security since our founding in 1969 by Reed Irvine, a former Marine Intelligence Officer in World War II who later became an economist with the Federal Reserve in Washington. AIM corrected the record on the Vietnam War with a documentary that aired on PBS; we spent years battling the Washington establishment in both parties to bring out the truth about American POW/MIA's; we exposed the lies in the CNN-Time magazine story on Operation Tailwind; and answered the tough questions on how we got into the 2003 Iraq War. AIM has long assumed the role of warriors for truth, and advocates for honest journalism without fear or favor.

Why Benghazi? We view these attacks as a sort of Rosetta stone, revealing much about the ideology and disposition of the Barack Obama administration. It wasn't just that the administration failed to secure our diplomatic mission or come to the aid of Americans sent there in harm's way: it was a much broader narrative. We watched the story unfold just two months before a presidential election, and saw how the media botched the story, providing cover for Obama as he headed toward re-election. Congress and the State Department-appointed Accountability Review Board seemed to be intent on obscuring the truth, rather than exposing it.

In the meantime, our colleagues at Special Operations Speaks (SOS) primed the investigative pumps, via Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), presenting to the U.S. Congress and to Speaker Boehner, a petition signed by nearly 1,000 special operations veterans demanding a joint Select Committee to investigate Benghazi. SOS soon became a contributing member of the CCB.

With the question we at AIM often ask ourselves before deciding on a course of action—"What would Reed Irvine do?"—we decided it was time to act. We started out with a press conference in July 2013, followed two months later by an all-day conference that was webcast live and later posted on our website ([www.aim.org/benghazi](http://www.aim.org/benghazi)) featuring Congressman Frank Wolf (R-VA), who was leading the call for a Select Committee; Judicial Watch, which was already at work filing Freedom of Information requests; Charles Woods, the father of one of the brave Americans killed in the attacks; nearly all of the CCB members, and others with an interest in the story.

The response was inspiring. New sources came forward and told us their stories. In April of 2014, we issued an Interim Report, with a press conference at the National Press Club. Among our speakers was Retired Rear Admiral Chuck Kubic, who was asked by those surrounding Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to deliver a message to the American government that Muammar Qaddafi was prepared to negotiate his abdication under a white flag of truce. Kubic

delivered the offer, but the response from the Obama administration was silence. Instead, the bombing in Libya began, and the U.S. government, and especially the Hillary Clinton State Department, began to facilitate the flow of arms to al Qaeda-connected terrorists, who then killed Qaddafi and precipitated Libya's descent into complete chaos. We called this report, "How America Switched Sides in the War on Terror."

A steady stream of new information subsequently has allowed the CCB to track the course of events in the post-Qaddafi timeframe. Among the most egregious (because unnecessary) failures was the refusal, despite multiple warnings, to adequately secure or remove our people from the Special Mission Compound in Benghazi and the nearby CIA Annex. Nor did the U.S. military pre-position forces as it should have to prepare for what have been seen as nearly inevitable contingencies. Then, once the attack was launched, with dozens of lives in immediate and dire peril, the Obama administration failed even to attempt to rescue those Americans battling for their lives under attack throughout the entirety of that awful night. This was an utter dereliction of duty. While we have more information today, we are still working to verify the chain of command orders that led to this dereliction of duty. And then there is the cover-up, organized and directed from the White House with the willing complicity of the CIA, Department of State and media all-too-willing to play along. That cover-up, which sought for weeks to blame the Islamic terror attack in Benghazi on a YouTube film about the life of Muhammad, enlisted elements of the U.S. Muslim Brotherhood and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation deliberately to push a narrative whose intent is to attack the right to free speech about Islam in submission to Islamic Law on slander. This, above all, is an unconscionable assault on the First Amendment.

Shortly after we released the Interim Report, which got much attention—for a few days—in places like the Drudge Report, "The O'Reilly Factor," the UK Daily Mail, and elsewhere, Speaker of the House John Boehner announced the formation of a House Select Committee to look into Benghazi, headed by former prosecutor Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC)—a move which we strongly applauded at the time. Now, more than two years later, the committee is expected to release its findings before the Republican and Democratic conventions in July of this year.

We offer this new report, "Betrayal in Benghazi: A Dereliction of Duty," as an example—a guide—to what the committee should be saying. There is a unified narrative to this story that needs to be told. We have been able to add many significant new findings to the story. The Select Committee report should not be just a series of transcripts of interviews, and the American public shouldn't be asked to read them all. The Select Committee, like our CCB, needs to present a narrative that puts the whole story in context, and holds people and institutions accountable. That is our goal with this second Citizens' Commission on Benghazi report.

Roger Aronoff  
Founder of the Citizens' Commission on Benghazi  
and Editor of Accuracy in Media  
June 2016

## **Betrayal in Benghazi: A Dereliction of Duty**

### **Key Findings:**

- The Obama administration actively supported the replacement of quasi-secular North African rulers in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt with Muslim Brotherhood rule.
- In Libya, the Obama administration turned against Muammar Qaddafi, who had become an ally in the fight against the Global Jihad Movement, and instead worked with the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood and materially aided known al-Qa'eda-linked militias to topple his regime.
- The Obama administration throughout 2012 deliberately withheld urgently-requested security for the U.S. mission in Benghazi, at least in part to buttress the false narrative that al-Qa'eda had been defeated for the benefit of the president's re-election campaign in 2012—despite the fact that Benghazi was one of the most vulnerable U.S. posts anywhere in the world in the volatile post-Qaddafi environment.
- For reasons not entirely clear, multiple advance warnings about an impending attack against the U.S. mission in Benghazi were ignored by the Obama administration as a whole, the Department of Defense specifically, and also especially Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who bore ultimate responsibility for diplomatic mission security.
- Despite an egregious failure by the Pentagon to pre-position forces in advance, various U.S. assets were available to deploy immediately when the Benghazi attack began the night of 11 September 2012, but were held back from even attempting a rescue effort.
- The President, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, former Secretary of Defense Panetta, and Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, must be required to answer for their dereliction of duty ('willfully refusing to perform ones duties,' a criminal offense under the United States Code) in failing to provide appropriate protection in advance and to commit forces immediately to a rescue attempt the night of 11-12 September 2012.
- The Obama White House and Clinton State Department led a concerted two-week cover-up regarding the facts of the Benghazi attack for crass political purposes and to collaborate with the international campaign led by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that seeks criminalization of all criticism of Islam.

## Executive Summary

The Citizens' Commission on Benghazi (CCB) released its first Benghazi report, "How America Switched Sides in the War on Terror," in April 2014. It detailed how the Obama administration rejected Muammar Qaddafi's efforts to discuss a ceasefire and possible abdication, and facilitated the provision of arms to al-Qaeda-linked rebels in Libya. It also covered the administration's dereliction of duty in not sending military assets to help save the Americans in Benghazi and its shameful cover-up of the truth afterward. Now, two years later, our findings have been confirmed and amplified by additional evidence. We also know much more about the Benghazi terror attack, thanks to courageous individuals who have come forward, brave sources willing to speak up, the work of investigative journalists, and the incredible tenacity of the team at Judicial Watch.

We understand more about the reasoning behind why President Barack Obama involved the United States (U.S.) with Libya's Islamic uprising (aka, 'Arab Spring') in the first place. It is evident that President Obama had an ideological commitment to support the extension of Muslim Brotherhood power across the Middle Eastern and North Africa (MENA) region, even if that meant knowingly supporting identifiable jihadis with the funding, training, and weapons to do it.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, evidence suggests that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Clinton Foundation, and unscrupulous individuals surrounding them decided to back the ouster of Libya's leader Muammar Qaddafi at least in part for financial reasons, including an expectation of lucrative deals to follow. Nevertheless, the fact that Secretary of State Clinton knew that the leadership of the Libyan revolt against Muammar Qaddafi was dominated by the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood and militia forces connected to al-Qa'eda is demonstrated by a number of now public Clinton emails.

The Obama administration and Clinton Department of State refusal to provide adequate security measures for the U.S. mission in Benghazi flowed at least in part from political imperatives of

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<sup>1</sup> See references to *Presidential Study Directive 11*, the 2010 Obama White House document that solicited proposals and instructed key government agencies to collaborate on formation and execution of a plan for enabling Muslim Brotherhood rule by way of regime change in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen and likely other Middle East countries. The 18-page report remains classified in spite of all efforts to obtain its release. Landler, Mark, "Secret Report Ordered by Obama Identified Potential Uprisings," *The New York Times*, 16 February 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/world/middleeast/17diplomacy.html>

the 2012 presidential election year, when campaign slogans pushed the narrative that Usama bin Laden was dead and al-Qa'eda was on the run. It would have seriously challenged that narrative to admit that U.S. policy in Libya had been an unmitigated disaster. Al-Qa'eda militias, which received recognition and assistance from our own officials, were now running amok, armed not only with the weapons the U.S. helped provide to them but with massive quantities of arms looted from Qaddafi's former stockpiles. Denying repeated requests for additional security in Benghazi was the Obama administration's way of pretending that nothing was amiss there and hoping the place wouldn't blow up completely—at least until after the November 2012 elections were behind them. This explanation alone is not entirely satisfactory, however, and other factors (including gross incompetence), should be considered. Bottom line, though, there is no possible excuse for this policy and those responsible for it must be held accountable before the American people.

Thanks in large measure to the willingness of several courageous members of the Benghazi CIA Annex's Global Response Staff (GRS) to speak out, we also know now that there were multiple advance warnings before the attack of 11 September 2012 that should have alerted the Departments of Defense and State, the Intelligence Community (IC), and the White House to impending disaster. The warnings were all ignored, with catastrophic results.

The most egregious dereliction of duty came during the night of 11-12 September 2012, when brave Americans battled alone for hours against overwhelming odds while the government that sent them in harm's way did not even attempt a rescue mission. We know now that U.S. forces were available in multiple locations, including Aviano Air Base and Naval Air Station Sigonella in Italy, at the Rota Naval Base in Spain, and the Commander's In-Extremis Force in Croatia, in addition to Foreign Emergency Support Teams (FEST). Someone in the U.S. chain of command decided not to send any of these forces into Libya to help. Further, the interagency task force called the Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG), established by presidential directive precisely for such terror attacks as this one, was not convened.

Secretary of State Clinton must be held responsible for her failure to provide adequate protection to the SMC in Benghazi in the months leading up to the attack, as well as for her failure to

immediately request permission from the Libyan government for cross-border authority, and then to convey that authority to available U.S. military forces. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, as well as USCINCEUR Adm. James G. Stavridis and USAFRICOM Commander General Carter F. Ham, all share responsibility for their failure to pre-position U.S. military forces in the face of so much advance warning about the situation in Benghazi. They also failed to insist on the timely dispatch of forces to at least attempt a rescue the night of the attack. But the ultimate responsibility for the Benghazi disaster lies with the commander-in-chief, President Barack Obama. To date, no one has been willing even to say where he was that night or what specific orders he may have issued (if any) before disappearing from the scene. That information needs to be subpoenaed under oath forthwith.

Lastly, the Obama administration cover-up that followed the Benghazi debacle served only to add insult to injury by denying the truth about what happened to the American people and suppressing with a heavy hand those who had been personally involved and who wanted to speak out. Instead, a hastily-concocted false narrative about a YouTube video was fed to the media and public alike in a campaign quickly, but efficiently, coordinated with the administration's domestic and international Muslim Brotherhood networks. The objective was to conceal the fact that al-Qa'eda-linked jihadis attacked our mission and killed four Americans that night. From their perspective, blaming a video that violated the Islamic Law on slander also bolstered the global campaign to criminalize criticism of Islam led by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), a close working partner of the Clinton State Department.

The following report is not intended to cover every single aspect of the Benghazi debacle, but will add new details to the CCB's earlier reporting on each of these phases of the Benghazi attack: before, during, and after. The thrust of our investigation has been not merely to document the sequence of events, but, more importantly, to reveal the reasons why the Obama administration and the Clinton State Department so radically changed U.S. policy in the war against the Global Jihad Movement (GJM) in ways that benefited this country's worst enemies. In so doing, these leaders also allowed a terror assault against our Benghazi mission that took the lives of four Americans, and then sought mendaciously to cover it all up for weeks afterward.



Our Citizens' Commission was formed in 2013 with the unsettling sense that neither the Congressional Committees, the State Department's Accountability Review Board (ARB), the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), nor even Representative Trey Gowdy's (R-SC) Select Committee on Benghazi would report these events in a way that was fully accurate and complete. It is therefore hoped that this report will provide much-needed information to the American people. The families of the fallen have a right to know and so we join our efforts with theirs to press rightful demands for accountability from our top officials who so badly failed in their Constitutional duties, not only on that fateful night in Benghazi, but before and after the events that unfolded there as well.

## **Betraying an Ally in the Global War On Terror**

Discerning analysts have long questioned why the Obama administration decided that violent intervention was necessary in Libya. It will be recalled that Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi stunned the world with his 19 December 2003 announcement<sup>2</sup> that he was giving up all his Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programs and inviting international inspectors to verify that commitment. He subsequently agreed to end all military dealings with Iran, North Korea, and Syria, renounced all support for terrorism, and re-established full diplomatic relations with the U.S. in May 2006.<sup>3</sup> U.S. trust in Qaddafi's support for what was then called the Global War on Terror (GWOT) was such that, in 2007, Abu Sufian bin Qumu, a key al-Qa'eda terrorist, was released from Guantanamo Bay detention and sent to Libya, where Qaddafi duly jailed him.<sup>4</sup> Bin Qumu had trained in one of Usama bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan and later worked for a bin Laden company in Sudan, before fighting alongside the Taliban. By 2008, however, Bin Qumu was out, among the first of known Libyan jihadis to be released in a 'reconciliation process' led by Qaddafi's son Saif al-Islam. Former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) member Abdelhakim Belhadj also was released from Libyan incarceration in 2008.<sup>5</sup> Later on, Bin Qumu would found Ansar al-Sharia in Derna and his forces would participate in the deadly 2012 Benghazi attacks. Christopher Stevens, named U.S. Envoy to the Libyan al-Qa'eda and Muslim Brotherhood rebels in early 2011, coordinated closely with Belhadj throughout 2011, despite knowing that Belhadj and the LIFG had been connected to al-Qa'eda for years. Yet despite Qaddafi's seemingly model behavior regarding his renunciation of WMD and support for GWOT, when al-Qa'eda, Muslim Brotherhood and various tribal elements rose up in revolt against the Qaddafi regime in February 2011, the Obama administration abruptly abandoned that relationship and instead sided with the jihadist rebels. Neither the U.S. Intelligence Community nor the military agreed with the Obama-Clinton decision to invade

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<sup>2</sup> Chronology of Libya's Disarmament and Relations with the United States, *Arms Control Association*, Updated February 2014. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/LibyaChronology>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Goldman, Adam, "Former Guantanamo detainee implicated in Benghazi attack," *The Washington Post*, January 7, 2014. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/former-guantanamo-detainee-implicated-in-benghazi-attack/2014/01/07/c73fdf78-77d5-11e3-8963-b4b654bcc9b2\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/former-guantanamo-detainee-implicated-in-benghazi-attack/2014/01/07/c73fdf78-77d5-11e3-8963-b4b654bcc9b2_story.html)

<sup>5</sup> "Ex-Guantánamo Prisoner Freed in Libya After Three Years' Detention—And Information About "Ghost Prisoners," 9 March 2010. <http://www.andyworthington.co.uk/2010/09/03/ex-guantanamo-prisoner-freed-in-libya-after-three-years-detention-and-information-about-ghost-prisoners/> See also: Nordland, Rod and Scott Shane, "Libyan, Once a Detainee, Is Now a U.S. Ally of Sorts," *The New York Times*, April 24, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/25/world/guantanamo-files-libyan-detainee-now-us-ally-of-sorts.html>

Libya, nor was that military action ever approved by the U.S. Congress. Clinton emails, now public, document clearly that she knew that al-Qa'eda in Libya and the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood were working closely together to bring down the Qaddafi regime. For example, a 27 February 2011 email from Clinton aide Jake Sullivan describes Ali al-Sallabi, the founder of the AQ-linked Libyan National party (LNP) and a long-time close associate of LIFG commander Abdelhakim Belhadj, as "a key figure in the Libyan Muslim brotherhood and [Muslim Brotherhood leader Sheikh Yusuf] Qaradawi's man in Libya."<sup>6</sup> Al-Qaradawi had issued a *fatwa* calling for the killing of Qaddafi on 22 February 2011. Muammar Qaddafi's son, Saif Qaddafi, called Ali al-Sallabi the 'spiritual leader' of the Libyan revolution,<sup>7</sup> while the *Wall Street Journal* described al-Sallabi's role in channeling military aid from Qatar to the Libyan al-Qa'eda fighters as central.<sup>8</sup>

From al-Qa'eda's planned timeline to an Islamic Caliphate, published in 2005, we read that The Fourth Phase was planned to take place between 2010 and 2013, when "al-Qaida will aim to bring about the collapse of the hated Arabic governments."<sup>9</sup> The Islamic Uprising across North Africa began with Tunisia in December 2010 and had spread to Egypt and Libya by February 2011. It is incontrovertible that the Obama administration's decision to back the Muslim Brotherhood in these countries contributed significantly to the jihadist power grab and the chaos that followed.

Clues about why Obama and Clinton (strongly supported by then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, and Samantha Power, then serving at the National Security Council) would betray a leader like Qaddafi—who'd seemingly done everything asked of him by the Western powers—emerge from some of the 3,000 emails released by the State Department from her private server in late December 2015. Nearly a third of those emails reportedly were from close Clinton confidant Sidney Blumenthal, whose correspondence included a number of messages

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<sup>6</sup> <https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/emailid/28627>

<sup>7</sup> "A View to Extremist Currents in Libya," *Kronos*.

[http://www.kronosadvisory.com/KRONOS\\_AViewToExtremistCurrentsInLibya\\_ApprovedForDistribution.pdf](http://www.kronosadvisory.com/KRONOS_AViewToExtremistCurrentsInLibya_ApprovedForDistribution.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Dagher, Sam, Charles Levinson, and Margaret Coker, "Tiny Kingdom's Huge Role in Libya Draws Concern," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 17, 2011.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204002304576627000922764650>

<sup>9</sup> Musharbash, Yassin, "What al-Qaida Really Wants," *Der Spiegel*, 08/12/2005. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/the-future-of-terrorism-what-al-qaida-really-wants-a-369448-druck.html>

providing all kinds of advice and information about Libya (some of which apparently originated with former CIA officer Tyler Drumheller, who died in 2015). Among that correspondence were messages in which Blumenthal repeatedly urged Clinton to intervene in Libya.

For one thing, Sidney Blumenthal and others apparently had some ideas about post-Qaddafi business deals in Libya. According to Benghazi Select Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC), Blumenthal's real motivation was "money," and specifically a deal to bring U.S. defense contractor Osprey Global Solutions<sup>10</sup> (in which Blumenthal held a personal stake) together with the Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Libyan Transitional National Council (TNC) government in a post-Qaddafi Libya.<sup>11</sup>

Europeans, especially the French, also looked at the Libya situation through a financial lens. Some of them saw Qaddafi's growing financial independence as a threat to their own financial interests. One of the Blumenthal emails, dated April 2, 2011, discusses Qaddafi's stockpiles of gold and silver, valued at more than \$7 billion. Reportedly, this wealth was to have been used to establish "a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar. This plan was designed to provide the Francophone African Countries with an alternative to the French franc (CFA)" in a bid to supplant France as the dominant power in Francophone Africa.<sup>12</sup> In 2011, French President Nicolas Sarkozy called the Libyan leader and Libya's reported plan to quit selling oil in U.S. dollars "a threat to the financial security of the world."<sup>13</sup> What happened to Qaddafi's gold and silver stocks after his defeat has not been disclosed.

In addition to Qaddafi's apparent bid to establish a pan-African hard currency outside the U.S. dollar system, he'd actually been demonstrating the possibility for financial independence with construction of the Great Man-made River project, a massive system of pipes that supplied water

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ospreyglobalsolutions.com/>

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Select Committee on Benghazi Chairman Representative Trey Gowdy (R-SC) to Ranking Member Elijah Cummings, dated October 7, 2015.

<http://benghazi.house.gov/sites/repUBLICANS.benghazi.house.gov/files/TG%20letter%20to%20EEC%2010.7.15.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> "Clinton Email Shows that Oil and Gold Were Behind Regime Change In Libya," 01/09/2016. <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2016-01-09/clinton-email-hints-oil-gold-were-behind-regime-change-libya>

<sup>13</sup> Newman, Alex, "Gadhafi's Gold-money Plan Would Have Devastated Dollar," *New American*, 11 November 2011. <http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/markets/item/4630-gadhafis-gold-money-plan-would-have-devastated-dollar>

to Saharan Libya from the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer. The project, begun in the 1980s, was entirely funded by the Libyan government. The U.S.-NATO intervention had been predicated on alleged humanitarian grounds (the so-called ‘Responsibility to Protect’—R2P—that Samantha Power favored)<sup>14</sup>, but NATO attack planes bombed the pipeline and then struck the factory that produced the pipes.<sup>15</sup>

Nor were claims of an impending humanitarian disaster based on reality (which only underscores sovereignty concerns with the R2P concept). Reports from USAID representatives in country, Clinton’s advisor Huma Abedin, and even Sidney Blumenthal all agreed that no such threat of a humanitarian disaster existed. Further, diplomats, U.S. military personnel and human rights organizations all expressed intense skepticism of Obama administration claims that Qaddafi was supplying his troops with Viagra in order to rape women who supported the rebellion against his government (a totally unsupported rumor passed to Clinton by Blumenthal).<sup>16</sup>

Rather, it is apparent that the Obama administration decision to announce official support for the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood-led al-Qa’eda militias was based at least in part on more of the dubious messages Sidney Blumenthal was feeding to Secretary Clinton. For example, on March 9, 2011, Blumenthal wrote in a “Source Comment” (possibly from Drumheller) that

*“Private individuals in Europe, with ties to the leadership of the [Muslim Brotherhood-dominated] National Libyan Council (NLC), plan to urge the NLC military committee to consider hiring private troops (mercenaries) to support, organize, and train the rebel forces in Libya. These individuals believe that NATO and the Western allies will not make a decision to aid the rebels until they are faced with a humanitarian disaster, and that the revolution is in danger. At the same time, these individuals believe a small number of private troops could turn the battle against Qaddafi's forces, particularly if they are equipped with*

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<sup>14</sup> UN Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>

<sup>15</sup> “GMR (Great Man-Made River) Water Supply Project, Libya.” <http://www.water-technology.net/projects/gmr/>

<sup>16</sup> Ross, Chuck, “Sid Blumenthal Floated Disputed Gaddafi Viagra Rape Rumor In Confidential Memo To Hillary,” *The Daily Caller*, 12/31/2015. <http://dailycaller.com/2015/12/31/sid-blumenthal-floated-disputed-gaddafi-viagra-rape-rumor-in-confidential-memo-to-hillary/>

*sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons. These individuals also believe that experienced troops will have little trouble shooting down Libyan aircraft and attack helicopters. In the opinion of these sources, this would have a devastating psychological affect [sic] on Qaddafi's troops.)”<sup>17</sup>*

Thus, when on 19 March 2011, Qaddafi’s forces were advancing on Benghazi, and the revolution that was based there actually did seem in danger of collapse, a “humanitarian disaster” was declared. In fact, nothing more than the defeat of the al-Qa’eda and Muslim Brotherhood rebels was likely, but that was enough to spur the U.S. and NATO to action by declaring that a “catastrophe” was in the making, even though Qaddafi had declared a temporary truce and pulled back from major rebel-held cities.<sup>18</sup> Against all apparent reason, then, this was the point when Secretary Clinton announced official U.S. government recognition of the jihadist rebel forces, the appointment of Christopher Stevens as envoy to the jihadis, and NATO began bombing Libya. Obviously these policies were not in response to any real humanitarian crisis, but rather to rescue the jihadist revolution against Muammar Qaddafi.

Secretary Clinton’s State Department aide Jake Sullivan was not exaggerating when he wrote in August 2011 that Mrs. Clinton had “leadership/ownership/stewardship of this country’s [L]ibya policy from start to finish.”<sup>19</sup> In audio recordings retrieved from Tripoli, a U.S. intermediary from the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicated that Secretary Clinton’s State Department controlled what intelligence would be provided to American officials in the lead-up to the Libyan intervention. These audio recordings also exposed how Secretary Clinton ordered the Pentagon to refuse to talk to Qaddafi’s son, Saif, after U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973 (to establish a no-fly zone over Libya) was passed on March 17, 2011.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of State Freedom of Information Act Virtual Reading Room Documents Search Results. UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2014-20439 Doc No. C05780144 Date: 01/07/2016 <https://foia.state.gov/search/results.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> “Libya: Gaddafi forces attacking rebel-held Benghazi,” *BBC*, 19 March 2011. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12793919>

<sup>19</sup> Pompei, Jennifer, “Hillary Clinton had ‘ownership’ of U.S. Libya policy, own aide said,” *The Washington Times*, May 21, 2015. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/may/21/hillary-clinton-had-ownership-of-us-libya-policy-o/>

<sup>20</sup> Shapiro, Jeffrey Scott and Kelly Riddell, “Exclusive: Secret tapes undermine Hillary Clinton on Libyan war,” *The Washington Times*, January 28, 2015. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jan/28/hillary-clinton-undercut-on-libya-war-by-pentagon-/print/>

As the CCB revealed in its first interim report,<sup>21</sup> Qaddafi's regime reached out just days later to retired Admiral Chuck Kubic in order to broker a possible abdication under a white flag of truce with AFRICOM. Although Qaddafi officials successfully made contact with AFRICOM officers under the command of General Carter Ham, who conveyed the possibility of a truce up the chain of command to Washington, the administration chose to nix these efforts. We have now learned that Qaddafi also wanted to make a deal with the British.<sup>22</sup> Despite Qaddafi's multiple attempts at a truce to discuss his possible abdication and exile, however, the U.S. and its partners were determined to intervene militarily in Libya's civil war on the side of al-Qa'eda—a catastrophic mistake that ultimately transformed Libya into an Islamic jihadist safe haven.

### **Running Guns to al-Qa'eda**

Sometime during March 2011, President Obama signed a Presidential Intelligence Finding that authorized U.S. support to the Libyan rebels. "It's fair to say that if we wanted to get weapons into Libya, we probably could. We're looking at all our options at this point," President Obama told *ABC News* at the time.<sup>23</sup> Yet, at the same time, one advisor was counseling Secretary Clinton against arming the rebels: "...B/c [sic] sending more arms into a society generally—particularly when they are as disorganized and fragmented as they are—will result in more violence—against each other," Anne-Marie Slaughter, the State Department's director of policy planning, told Secretary Clinton.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, intervention carried the day, and so, Operation Zero Footprint was launched. It was run under the military command authority of NATO, not the U.S. military, although Admiral James G. Stavridis was the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) at the time. He had replaced AFRICOM Commander Gen. Carter Ham with responsibility for oversight of the Libyan campaign.

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<sup>21</sup> "How America Switched Sides in the War on Terror: An Interim Report by the Citizens' Commission On Benghazi," *Citizens' Commission on Benghazi*, April 22, 2014. <http://www.aim.org/benghazi/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/CCB-Interim-Report-4-22-2014.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Sims, Alexandra, "Tony Blair 'tried to save Colonel Gaddafi' just before bombing of Libya," *Independent*, 10 December 2015. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tony-blair-tried-to-save-colonel-gaddafi-just-before-bombing-of-libya-10479415.html>

<sup>23</sup> Hosenball, Mark, "Exclusive: Obama authorizes secret help for Libya rebels," *Reuters*, March 31, 2011. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-usa-order-idUSTRE72T6H220110331>

<sup>24</sup> "Factbox: Emails offer window on Clinton's handling of Libya crisis," *Reuters*, May 22, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-clinton-emails-details-factbox-idUSKBN0072IE20150522>

As its name suggests, the objective of Operation Zero Footprint was to facilitate the covert transfer of weapons to the Libyan rebels without calling attention to the key coordinating role of the U.S. and specifically the Hillary Clinton State Department, which had overall control of the arms transfers. To avoid any concerns over obtaining Congressional approval for funding, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) arranged the financing. Qatar served as the logistics hub and shipping agent.

Given the abundant reporting available in the open source arena alone, there is no question that Christopher Stevens, appointed official U.S. Envoy to the rebels in March 2011, knew that the key leaders of the rebellion whom he was instrumental in arming—such as Abdelhakim Belhadj—were jihadis. They had a history stretching back to fighting with Usama bin Laden in Afghanistan and then joining bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and other top AQ leaders in the Sudan in the early 1990s. Further, the Obama administration and the Clinton State Department knew perfectly well that Belhadj’s Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG, renamed The Libya Islamic Movement for Change in February 2011), which he’d founded upon returning to Libya from Afghanistan in the early 1990s, had been an al-Qa’eda affiliate since 2007.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the State Department had already designated the LIFG a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) on 8 December 2004. Nevertheless, no doubt in possession of the same information and maybe more, the United Kingdom (UK) and MI 6, keen to see Muammar Qaddafi assassinated, had sheltered and sponsored LIFG leadership figures such as Sami al-Saadi and Abu Anas al-Libi for years.<sup>26</sup> This cannot have been unknown to MI 6 partners among the U.S. Intelligence Community.

Captured and imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay (later released to Libya) in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, key LIFG figures including Belhadj, al-Saadi and al-Libi were all released in the 2008-2010 timeframe under Saif Qaddafi’s ultimately suicidal ‘reconciliation process.’ It will be recalled that Stevens served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli from 2007 to 2009, and took an oddly solicitous interest in the welfare of Libyan jihadis detained in Qaddafi’s prisons. His interest included Abu Sufian bin Qumu, who would later play a leadership

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<sup>25</sup> Smith II, Michael S., “A View to Extremist Currents in Libya,” *Kronos*, 16 December 2011. [http://www.kronosadvisory.com/KRONOS\\_AViewToExtremistCurrentsInLibya\\_ApprovedForDistribution.pdf](http://www.kronosadvisory.com/KRONOS_AViewToExtremistCurrentsInLibya_ApprovedForDistribution.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Lopez, Clare, “Why Now? U.S. Nabs Top Al-Qaeda Suspect Known for Years,” *Accuracy in Media*, October 8, 2013. <http://www.aim.org/guest-column/why-now-u-s-nabs-top-al-qaeda-suspect-known-for-years/>



role in the September 2012 attack on the Special Mission Compound (SMC) where Stevens was killed.<sup>27</sup> Bin Qumu trained at one of bin Laden's terror camps in Afghanistan in the early 1990s, then joined bin Laden in Sudan, before returning to Afghanistan pre-9/11 to fight alongside the Taliban. He then fled to Pakistan, was turned over to the U.S. and sent to Guantanamo Bay. Under the terms of his release back to Libya, bin Qumu was imprisoned by Qaddafi, until his 2008 release under the 'reconciliation process.' He ultimately rose to command the Ansar al-Shariah element centered in Derna, which was identified as the lead group in the September 2012 attack.<sup>28</sup> As Stevens' own reporting from Tripoli indicated, he was not unaware that Libya (and Derna in particular) were a source of jihadis going to fight U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq. However, he obviously had no clear understanding of Islam or the doctrinal mandate to jihad, and to some extent rather romanticized the Libyan jihadis who would later lead the 2011 uprising against Muammar Qaddafi—and ultimately conspire to murder him.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, it is hard to escape the conclusion that senior U.S. military officers such as U.S. Adm. James Stavridis, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's supreme allied commander in Europe, were disingenuous at a minimum when they claimed in open Senate testimony in late March 2011 that "Islamist fighters" [*sic*, jihadis] were small in number with only a limited role in the rebel ranks.<sup>30</sup>

Although there is no evidence directly linking weapons provided to these al-Qa'eda jihadis by the Qataris, with U.S. and NATO's explicit approval and assistance, to the attack on the SMC in September 2012, it is a certain fact that had the Obama administration not switched sides in what was then called the Global War on Terror (GWOT), jihadist rebels never would have succeeded

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<sup>27</sup> Stevens, Christopher, "LIBYA: FOLLOW-UP ON ACCESS TO RETURNED GTMO DETAINEES," 2007 December 13, 16:50 (Thursday). [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07TRIPOLI1039\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07TRIPOLI1039_a.html)

<sup>28</sup> Goldman, Adam, "Former Guantanamo Detainee Implicated in Benghazi attack," *The Washington Post*, January 7, 2014. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/former-guantanamo-detainee-implicated-in-benghazi-attack/2014/01/07/c73fdf78-77d5-11e3-8963-b4b654bcc9b2\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/former-guantanamo-detainee-implicated-in-benghazi-attack/2014/01/07/c73fdf78-77d5-11e3-8963-b4b654bcc9b2_story.html)

<sup>29</sup> Stevens, Christopher, "DIE HARD IN DERNA," 2008 June 2, 16:59 (Monday). [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08TRIPOLI430\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08TRIPOLI430_a.html)

<sup>30</sup> Entous, Adam, Keith Johnson, and Charles Levinson, "Amid Libya Rebels, 'Flickers' of al Qaeda," *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 March 2011. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704559904576231172563565048>

in overthrowing the West's erstwhile ally, Muammar Qaddafi, in the first place.<sup>31</sup> But switch sides they did, for reasons noted at the beginning of this report. A UN Security Council arms embargo was established against Libya on 26 February 2011.<sup>32</sup> Yet the Hillary Clinton State Department, operating under President Obama's Presidential Directive authorizing covert action to destabilize Qaddafi including weapons trafficking to the Libyan al-Qa'eda-linked jihadis, explicitly violated that arms embargo and approved at least one U.S. weapons shipment to those jihadis. Documents obtained from the burned-out SMC by *The Washington Times* detail an arms shipment from Dolarian Capital, Inc. of Fresno, California that was to include "rocket launchers, grenade launchers, 7,000 machine guns, and 8 million rounds of ammunition,"<sup>33</sup> Although the Dolarian licensing request was approved by the State Department in spring 2011, it was revoked before the armaments were sent.

Given that NATO air and sea forces effectively blockaded Libya's Mediterranean coastline from late March 2011 onward, no arms shipments could have gotten through to the jihadist rebels unless the US. and other NATO powers allowed it. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, a team of some 60 Qataris set up rebel command centers in Benghazi and elsewhere, coordinating there with dozens of Western liaison officers who included Americans, British and French. Together, between April 2011 and the fall of Tripoli in October 2011, they coordinated the delivery of at least 18 cargo planes from Qatar that were filled with assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and other small arms, as well as military uniforms and vehicles. Ali al-Sallabi, one of State Department envoy Christopher Stevens' key al-Qa'eda/Muslim Brotherhood partners in Benghazi, personally helped to orchestrate at least a dozen of those shipments. One Western diplomat was quoted as saying that "Everyone was quite happy" with the Qatari arms shipments, including the Obama White House and Clinton State Department. "It's what everyone wanted to do but wasn't allowed to."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Risen, James, Mark Mazzetti, and Michael S. Schmidt, "U.S.-Approved Arms for Libya Rebels Fell Into Jihadis' Hands," *The New York Times*, December 5, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/world/africa/weapons-sent-to-libyan-rebels-with-us-approval-fell-into-islamist-hands.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/world/africa/weapons-sent-to-libyan-rebels-with-us-approval-fell-into-islamist-hands.html?_r=0)

<sup>32</sup> "Security Council imposes sanctions on Libyan authorities in bid to stem violent repression," *UN News Centre*, 26 February 2011. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37633>

<sup>33</sup> Solomon, John and Jeffrey Scott Shapiro, "Clinton State Department approved U.S. weapons shipment to Libya despite ban," *The Washington Times*, October 20, 2015. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/oct/20/hillary-clinton-state-department-approved-us-weapo/?page=all>

<sup>34</sup> *The Wall Street Journal*, October 17, 2011.

Clinton and Stevens understandably kept a low profile on their collaboration with the Libyan jihadis, so that in the end, the only American visibly caught up in the tangled U.S. gun-running operation to the Libyan rebels was American arms dealer Marc Turi, head of the Turi Defense Group. He has been charged by the U.S. government with having allegedly falsified paperwork to supply the rebels with weapons, a charge which Turi denies. Instead, Turi alleges, he applied for an export license to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar at the same time that the U.S. government actually was facilitating weapons deliveries to the rebels. “It was then, and remains now, my opinion that the United States did participate, directly or indirectly, in the supply of weapons to the Libyan Transitional National Council,”<sup>35</sup> former CIA officer and Turi business partner David Manners declared on Turi’s behalf in May 2015.

Despite such troubling evidence that Obama and Clinton were deeply and knowingly involved in running guns to al-Qa’eda in Libya, when Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-KS) asked Clinton a direct question (three times) during her October 2015 hearing before the Benghazi Select Committee, “Were you aware, or are you aware of any efforts by the U.S. government in Libya to provide any weapons, either directly or indirectly, or through a cutout to any militias or opposition to Qaddafi’s forces?,” she denied it, saying “No” three times. She was also asked directly by Rep. Pompeo whether she’d ever considered the idea of using private security experts to arm the opposition in Libya. She denied this, too, saying, “Not seriously, no.” After Pompeo quoted her own words back to her from an email Clinton had sent to her aide Jake Sullivan that read, “FYI, the idea of using private security experts to arm the opposition should be considered,” she then sidestepped again, saying, “It was not considered seriously.”<sup>36</sup>

There was a final important footnote to the gun-running campaign. In the CCB’s April 2014 Interim Report, we described the following incident that bears repeating, as it is quite revealing of individuals and groups and their allegiances in the 2011 Libyan civil war. As we wrote then:

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<sup>35</sup> Browne, Pamela and Catherine Herridge, “Exclusive: The Arming of Benghazi.” *Fox News*, June 27, 2015. <http://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/2015/06/27/exclusive-arming-benghazi.html>

<sup>36</sup> “Full text: Clinton testifies before House committee on Benghazi,” *The Washington Post*, October 20, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/10/22/transcript-clinton-testifies-before-house-committee-on-benghazi/#third>

“After Qaddafi’s regime had been ousted, a delegation from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) traveled to Libya to collect payment for the weapons the UAE had financed and Qatar had delivered to the Transitional National Council (TNC) during the war,” we reported.<sup>37</sup> Some of those weapons were diverted, however, as emerged when the UAE came calling to collect payment in January 2012:

*“The UAE delegation was seeking \$1 billion it claimed was owed. During their visit to Tripoli, the UAE officials discovered that half of the \$1 billion worth of weapons it had financed for the rebels had, in fact, been diverted by Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the Muslim Brotherhood head of the Libyan TNC, and sold to Qaddafi. Furthermore, according to information learned during the UAE visit to Tripoli, when Jalil learned that Major General Abdel Fatah Younis, Qaddafi’s former Minister of the Interior before his late February 2011 defection to the rebel forces, had found out about the weapons diversion, he ordered [Ahmed] Abu Khattala, leader of the Abu Obeida Bin al-Jarrah brigade to kill him. Abu Khattala, later identified as the Ansar al-Shariah commander who led the 11 September 2012 attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, accepted the orders and directed the killing of Gen. Younis in July 2011.”*

Significantly, as we noted at the time, this incident demonstrates that there was a direct chain of command leading from Libya’s Muslim Brotherhood leadership at the TNC level down to Abu Khattala’s militia, soon to become part of the newly-formed al-Qa’eda-linked Ansar al-Shariah group after the war. Captured in June 2014 by members of the U.S. Special Operations Command, Abu Khattala was indicted for conspiring to attack and destroy two U.S. facilities in Benghazi, as well as kill the Department of State and CIA staff at those facilities.<sup>38</sup> (Interestingly, as senior policy fellow at the National Review Institute and a contributing editor

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<sup>37</sup> CCB Report, 22 April 2014

<sup>38</sup> Peralta, Eyder, “Benghazi Suspect, Ahmed Abu Khattala, Is Indicted On 17 New Charges,” *National Public Radio*, October 14, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/10/14/356196973/benghazi-suspect-ahmed-abu-khattala-is-indicted-on-17-new-charges>

of *National Review*, Andrew McCarthy, points out in a May 11, 2016 column,<sup>39</sup> the Justice Department decision not to seek the death penalty against Khattala reveals much about the politicization of the Benghazi attack by the Obama administration. For if Khattala is to be charged with helping to coordinate a terrorist attack that resulted in the deaths of four Americans, then the administration can no longer pretend that the 11-12 September 2012 ‘incident’ was merely a protest about a video that spun out of control. Khattala also would be permitted in his own defense to attempt to show that others—al-Qa’eda jihadis perhaps?—played a bigger role in the attack than he did and that the Obama administration even contributed to the debacle through its own actions during the 2011 revolution, in materially supporting the very same terrorists who later would attack the mission.)

### **Libya’s Descent into Chaos & Warnings Ignored**

After Qaddafi was executed on October 20, 2011, the Obama administration insisted on maintaining a light footprint in Libya. President Obama, now facing an important re-election campaign in 2012, was desperate to maintain a façade of normalcy and success in Libya, despite a security situation that was deteriorating badly and rapidly. Rather than admit the reality of gathering chaos and al-Qa’eda militias running amok, Obama and his Secretary of State allowed a slow attrition of security forces in an increasingly unstable Libya. The White House had armed, backed, encouraged, and funded the Islamic Uprising across North Africa, indifferent to the actual intent of the jihadis who staged it, which was to eject all Western presence from the region. Others pulled out but the Americans had remained—and now it was their turn.

Shortly after the U.S. State Department rented the Special Mission Compound (SMC) in Benghazi a group affiliated with Ansar al-Sharia “moved in next door.” Yet when the diplomatic staff requested a machine gun and sandbags to fortify the SMC, they were told “it wasn’t

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<sup>39</sup> McCarthy, Andrew, “No Death Penalty for a Benghazi Jihadist—Is this Law or Politics?,” *National Review*, May 11, 2016. <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/435255/benghazi-terrorist-no-death-penalty-justice-department?target=author&tid=900151>

aesthetically pleasing and would upset the neighbors,” according to Fox News.<sup>40</sup> The Intelligence Community produced literally hundreds of reports about terrorist militias that had both the capability and intent to strike the U.S. presence in Libya. There were at least 20 security incidents involving international organizations including the United Nations (UN), non-governmental organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), other diplomats and missions, as well as the SMC itself during the months leading up to September 2012.<sup>41</sup>

Regional Security Officer Eric Nordstrom, “compiled a list of 234 security incidents in Libya between June 2011 and July 2012, 50 of which took place in Benghazi,” according to one Congressional report.<sup>42</sup> The Red Cross was hit by RPGs in May. Then in early June a car bomb exploded outside of the hotel where Ambassador Stevens was staying. By June 6, an IED blew a hole in the Special Mission Compound’s perimeter wall. Days later the British Ambassador to Libya’s convoy was hit by RPGs. The British and the Red Cross pulled out of Libya, but America remained.

Ambassador Stevens and other State Department officials in Libya made repeated requests for additional security measures (including personnel), especially for the U.S. Mission in Benghazi. All were either denied or ignored. When Regional Security Officer Eric Nordstrom requested additional security personnel in March of 2012, including five temporary duty Diplomatic Security staffers, a State Department employee asked him why Embassy Tripoli wanted “the sun, the moon, and the stars,” according to the Senate Intelligence Committee. That Committee also reported that Ms. Charlene Lamb, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary Of State for International Programs for Diplomatic Security, had complained that if security requests were filled “it would be embarrassing and give Libya more security agents than in Yemen and Pakistan.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “RPT: ‘Nothing Was Done’ After Militia Group Moved In Next Door to US Consulate in Benghazi,” *Fox News*, July 22, 2014. <http://insider.foxnews.com/2014/07/22/rpt-militia-group-moved-next-door-us-consulate-benghazi-prior-attack>

<sup>41</sup> Report of the U.S. Senate Committee on Intelligence Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya September 11-12, 2012. January 15, 2014. <https://www.congress.gov/113/crpt/srpt134/CRPT-113srpt134.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Flashing Red: A Special Report on the Terrorist Attack at Benghazi. December 30, 2012. Page 5.

<sup>43</sup> Senate Intelligence Committee Report

In May 2012, Undersecretary of State for Management Patrick Kennedy turned down a request<sup>44</sup> for the Special Forces Site Security Team to retain a DC-3 airplane. According to former Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Hicks,<sup>45</sup> Kennedy also declined a Department of Defense offer to extend the Special Forces Site Security team mission in Libya in July of 2012. In accordance with protocol, Ambassador Christopher Stevens in turn then subsequently twice refused General Ham's offer of assistance. Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Wood, who commanded those 16 Special Forces men, pulled out in August 2012, leaving only five Special Forces men behind. Speaking to a reporter in 2015, LTC Wood recalled that "They gave us nothing to work with. We had to resource everything we could with what we had in front of us, contracting with the locals, seeking the Agency's [CIA] help and working with meager internal resources." According to Wood, State Department officials in Washington "had their minds made up. They were not going to provide additional security there. Period."<sup>46</sup> Quite. Charlene Lamb, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security, responded to the request that the team be allowed to stay in Libya with an email: "NO, I do not [I repeat] not want them to ask for the [military security] team to stay!"<sup>47</sup>

When the local landlord who rented the SMC property to the State Department began to express increased concern for the safety of his family if Americans continued to occupy the property, and even the local Libyan security guards began to worry about showing up for work, these signs should have been indicators about an impending attack. Wood tried to warn Stevens and the State Department, but to no avail. Obama and Clinton had decided the Department's mission in Benghazi would have to fend for itself and that was that. In all, the Obama administration ignored over 600 requests for security in Libya in 2012, with 83 of those requests coming in July and August. In sharp contrast to her intense involvement in the war to overthrow al-Qaddafi,

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<sup>44</sup> Tapper, Jake, "Email Shows State Department Rejecting Request of Security Team at US Embassy in Libya," *ABC News*, October 5, 2012. <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/10/email-shows-state-department-rejecting-request-of-security-team-at-us-embassy-in-libya/>

<sup>45</sup> Hicks, Gregory N., "Gregory Hicks: Benghazi and the Smearing of Chris Stevens," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 22, 2014. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304302704579332732276330284>

<sup>46</sup> Solomon, John, "Memos recovered from Benghazi compound detail staff security worries," *The Washington Times*, October 19, 2015. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/oct/19/benghazi-memos-recovered-from-compound-detail-staf/?page=all>

<sup>47</sup> Rosenthal, John, "Newsmax Exclusive: US Hired al-Qaida-Linked Group to Defend Benghazi Mission," *Newsmax*, 2 May 2013. <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/benghazi-consulate-protected-alqaida/2013/05/02/id/502565/>

Secretary Clinton testified in October 2015 that she didn't see any of the security requests issued in 2012.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, on 29 August 2012, the Libyan government placed the city of Benghazi under a "state of maximum alert" until further notice due to a string of attacks on foreigners and other acts of violence, according to the Libyan Deputy Interior Minister Wanis al-Sharif, who spoke on Libya TV.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Emergency Plan**

There was an Emergency Plan of action for the SMC that was drawn up by Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security in late 2011, in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Qaddafi's government. By 2012, however, the security situation on the ground, especially in Benghazi, had deteriorated badly. If anything, circumstances demanded a significant increase in security measures at the SMC; and yet, instead, throughout the year in the months leading up to the September 2012 attack, the State Department consistently downplayed the increasing violence by Islamic terror groups against Westerners and downgraded even what inadequate security measures the SMC had previously had. The question of why has never been adequately pressed—or answered.

The original Emergency Plan was based on Ambassador Stevens occupying Villa A rather than Villa C, as he decided to do after Villa A had been turned back to the Libyan owner. Villa C was considered vulnerable because the exterior wall, while more than ten feet high on the inside of the compound, was less than six feet high on the outside (due to the slope of the ground). That wall was not topped, as it should have been, with concertina barbed wire. Further, the interior ground of the compound between that wall and Villa C was covered with vegetation that could provide cover and concealment to any potential attackers who got in over the wall. A vehicle and guard were to be positioned at the southern wall gate at all times. Additionally, all Americans and all vehicles were equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) devices called "Blue

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<sup>48</sup> Hunter, Melanie, "More Than 600 Benghazi Security Requests Never Reached Clinton's Desk, But Reports on Libya from Her 'Friend' Did," *CNS News*, October 22, 2015. <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/melanie-hunter/more-600-benghazi-security-requests-never-reached-clintons-desk-reports>

<sup>49</sup> "Libya: State Of Emergency Announced In Benghazi," *STRATFOR*, August 29, 2012. <https://www.stratfor.com/situation-report/libya-state-emergency-announced-benghazi>



Force Trackers” that, once activated, were connected directly to the State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security in Washington, DC. The personal devices were kept in “Go Bags,” however, and not worn on the person. There is reporting that one of these devices from the SMC that was activated that night was tracked long after to a local mosque in Benghazi, Libya.



## Grounds/Compound Imagery

Google Earth Imagery, Perimeter Outline



**Aerial view of the Special Mission Compound including Villas B & C, the TOC and perimeter gates**

If there were an attack while the Ambassador was inside Villa C, the plan was to move him under cover of a wall of fire to the Tactical Operations Center (TOC), which was easier to defend. Then, a call would be made for assistance to the CIA Annex, where a previously-designated three members of the Global Response Staff (GRS) would be dispatched immediately to the Ambassador's compound. Meanwhile, members of the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) at the SMC were to phone the 17 February Martyrs Brigade Quick Reaction Force (QRF) for help. Repeated drills had trimmed the Brigade's response time from its barracks, some 1.9 kilometers away, down to seven minutes or less. The Brigade included some 45 to 50 men.

It is worthy of note here that on the night of the attack, all of the DSS members' protective gear and weapons were in storage in another building removed from where they were. One of the reasons there was no return fire from DSS defenders at the SMC is that they could not get to their gear and weapons before being overrun. CCB has not been able to determine who gave orders or who permitted a situation possibly against standing orders in which DSS agents would

be physically separated for any length of time from their weapons—much less on the night of 9/11.<sup>50</sup>



### **Aerial view of the Special Mission Compound, CIA Annex, and air exfiltration point**

Once the Annex GRS team arrived at the SMC, they were to join forces with the DSS personnel and move the Ambassador and other Americans out of the compound as rapidly as possible—not to stand and fight. Once at the Annex, the next phase of evacuation would have been to the Benghazi Airport for exfiltration. If the airport were closed, then the plan was to stay at the CIA Annex until U.S. military assets arrived (landing in a nearby open field) and then fly out on a Marine Corps helicopter. The SMC DSS agents conducted daily communications checks with AFRICOM to ensure coordination and readiness according to this plan.

The last exfiltration fallback, should all else fail, was a road convoy overland eastward to the Egyptian border under protection of a 17 February Martyrs Brigade escort. Their mission, in such a case, was to arrive as quickly as possible at the SMC, clear any threat, secure the land venue and prepare for the exfiltration operation. DSS agents drilled these various scenarios

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<sup>50</sup> Stephen, Chris, “US consulate attack in Benghazi: a challenge to official version of events,” *The Guardian*, 9 September 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/09/us-consulate-benghazi-attack-challenge>

repeatedly with the 17 February Martyrs Brigade members, but in the final analysis they knew they could not defend the SMC against a serious armed assault.

As events unfolded the night of 11-12 September 2012, there was no part of this that went according to plan.

### **The CIA Annex: Zero Footprint 2.0**

The CIA Annex in Benghazi was far better fortified than the U.S. Special Mission Compound, but it did not operate as a fully clandestine Base of Operations. The CIA's Annex Security Team, a team of elite former military members who served under the CIA's then-secretive Global Response Staff (GRS), traveled with the CIA case officers when they went into Benghazi proper. According to the Annex Security Team authors of the book *13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*, one contractor "realized that they weren't fooling anyone. Even a casual observer would have noticed the tight security, not to mention the carloads of Americans driving in and out, day and night."<sup>51</sup>

In an ominous episode that the GRS team understood was indicative of things to come, team members were stopped in the summer of 2012 by a heavily armed contingent of Libyans they believe were members of Ansar al-Sharia. When they called for backup, CIA Chief of Base "Bob" told them the February 17 Martyrs Brigade would assist them. They never came.

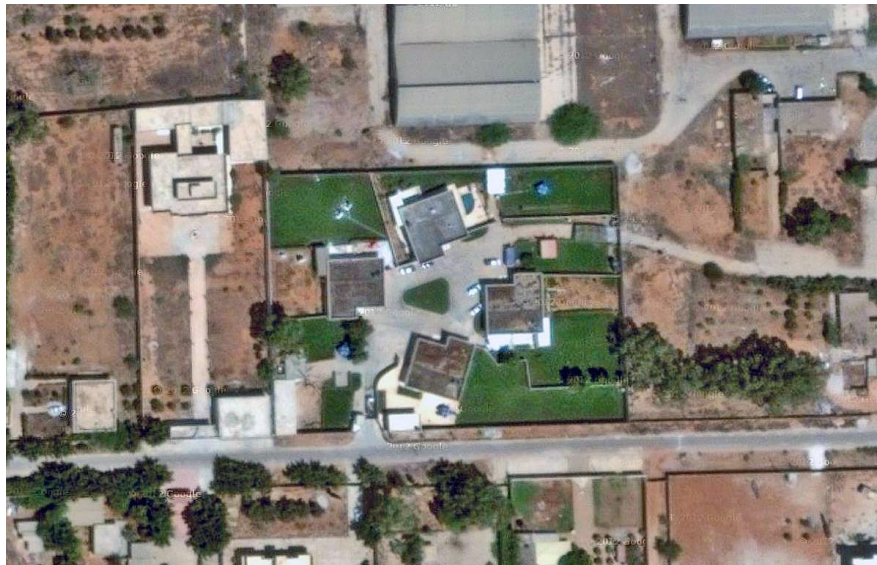
By 2012, alarm had risen everywhere about the quantity and quality of weapons in which Libya was now awash. The shipments of arms from Qatar and elsewhere had only added to the enormous stockpiles of Qaddafi's weapons that had been looted during and after the 2011 revolution. Of particular concern were the many thousands of Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs) that had gone missing, among them large numbers of MANPADs (Man-Portable-Air-Defense-System), guided missiles capable of bringing down aircraft. One of the principal purposes for maintaining the CIA Annex after the revolution was to attempt to recover as many of these dangerous weapons as possible through Libyan cut-outs, buy them up off the market for

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<sup>51</sup> "13 Hours in Benghazi: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi," September 9, 2014. <http://www.amazon.com/13-Hours-Account-Happened-Benghazi/dp/1455582271>

\$125,000-\$150,000 each, and ship them out of Libya. Two Libyan shipping companies handled the weapons shipments: the AL BAHAR ALMUTAWASET (Mediterranean) Shipping Agency (with headquarters in Benghazi, Libya—URL at <http://www.med-ship.com/main.html>) and the Mediterranean Shipping Company out of Tripoli (<http://www.msclibya.com/>). Fox News confirmed in October 2012 that a Libyan-flagged ship, the *Al Entisar* (“The Victory”), had docked in the Turkish port of Iskenderun on 5 September 2012, carrying a 400-ton cargo that included surface-to-air anti-aircraft missiles, RPGs and Russian-designed shoulder-launched MANPADs.<sup>52</sup> Other weapons shipments out of Libya went by specially chartered air flights to Jordan or Turkey for overland ground delivery into Syria.

The CIA Annex compound contained four buildings whose spaces included areas for the collection and pre-shipment storage of the SAMs and other weapons that were being shipped to Syria.



**Google Earth view of the Annex compound with its 4 buildings.**

Sometime in early 2012, President Obama signed a secret Intelligence Finding that authorized the CIA and other U.S. agencies to provide covert support for the Syrian rebels, who were then

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<sup>52</sup> Browne, Pamela K. and Catherine Herridge, “Was Syrian weapons shipment factor in ambassador’s Benghazi visit?,” *Fox News*, October 25, 2012. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/10/25/was-syrian-weapons-shipment-factor-in-ambassadors-benghazi-visit.html>

trying to depose Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The Syrian National Council and the Syrian Free Army (SFA), however secular some of their initial members may have been or still are, quickly became dominated by al-Qa'eda- and Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated groups as Sunni Gulf kingdoms, including Qatar and Saudi Arabia, pumped in support to help oust Shi'ite Iran's Damascus satrap regime. Sometime in mid-2012, the U.S. Department of the Treasury issued a waiver through the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) to authorize communications, funding, and logistics assistance to the Syrian rebels. The Syrian Support Group, with Obama/Chicago connections, became the U.S. conduit for aid to various Syrian rebel militias. Turkey became the distribution hub. It is notable, however, that SFA statements from the 2012 time period complained that they were not receiving any missiles; it now appears that at least some of the recipients instead were jihadist units that would eventually coalesce into the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS—later, simply Islamic State or IS).

By November 2011 the new Libyan government, full of al-Qa'eda and Muslim Brotherhood wartime operatives like Abdelhakim Belhadj, already had indicated its support for the Syrian jihadist rebels by sending a delegation led by Belhadj (now Tripoli Military Commander) that month to offer Libyan fighters and weapons. Some familiar faces from the U.S. Muslim Brotherhood also made appearances among the senior ranks of the Syrian opposition. Louay Safi, a top U.S. Muslim Brotherhood figure with both the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), as well as a former Pentagon advisor, appeared in August 2011 at a Syrian National Council press event in Istanbul as its new Political Director.<sup>53</sup>

Now-declassified documents from the Department of Defense obtained by the indefatigable Judicial Watch in May 2015 show that not only was the Obama administration fully aware of the leading role being played by al-Qa'eda and other jihadist elements among the Syrian rebel forces, but that as early as 2012, it (“the West, Gulf Countries, and Turkey”) viewed such “Salafis” (including the then-Islamic State in Iraq, from which the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, ISIS, would arise) as a desirable presence that should be supported in order to isolate the

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<sup>53</sup> Poole, Patrick, “Pentagon Islamic Adviser Reappears as Political Leader for Syrian Muslim Brotherhood-Dominated Group,” *Breitbart*, 25 July 2012. <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2012/07/25/pentagon-islamic-adviser-reappears-as-political-leader-for-syrian-muslim-brotherhood-dominated-group/>

Syrian regime and lead eventually to regime change there.<sup>54</sup> While the CIA had the lead for this phase of operations to push for the replacement of quasi-secular MENA (Middle East North Africa) region rulers with jihadis more willing to enforce Islamic Law (shariah), the Hillary Clinton State Department and Ambassador Christopher Stevens back in Libya knew full well what was going on, and were working to support that same mission. In fact, according to Judicial Watch documents obtained from the Department of Defense in May 2015, the Obama administration was fully aware “that weapons were being shipped from the Port of Benghazi to rebel troops in Syria” and, while not saying exactly who was shipping those weapons, clearly identifies who was receiving them: “the Salafist, the Muslim Brotherhood, and AQI are the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria.”<sup>55</sup>

Much speculation has been directed at the strong likelihood that top members of Congress—specifically the Gang of Eight—were briefed on activities at the Benghazi mission, from 2011 through the September 2012 attack. During that period, John Boehner (R-OH) was Speaker of the House while Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) was the Minority Leader. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) Chairman was Mike Rogers (R-MI) and his Democrat counterpart was Charles ‘Dutch’ Ruppberger (D-MD). On the Senate side, the Majority Leader was Harry Reid (D-NV) with Mitch McConnell (R-KY) serving as the Senate Minority Leader. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) chaired the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) and her Republican counterpart on the SSCI was Saxby Chambliss (R-GA). A plethora of Congressional Committees established to get to the bottom of what happened in Benghazi expended vast amounts of time and taxpayer money without coming close to what this CCB report, and its predecessor Interim Report in April 2014, have revealed with far less of either. A Select Committee on Benghazi was finally established under the leadership of Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC) on May 8, 2014 after revelations by Judicial Watch made Speaker Boehner’s long reluctance to agree to it impossible to maintain any longer. Although it’s not known publicly to what extent these lawmakers were briefed on the Obama administration’s al-Qa’eda

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.judicialwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Pg.-291-Pgs.-287-293-JW-v-DOD-and-State-14-812-DOD-Release-2015-04-10-final-version11.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> “Judicial Watch: Defense, State Department Documents Reveal Obama Administration Knew that al Qaeda Terrorists Had Planned Benghazi Attack 10 Days in Advance,” *Judicial Watch*, May 18, 2015. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/press-releases/judicial-watch-defense-state-department-documents-reveal-obama-administration-knew-that-al-qaeda-terrorists-had-planned-benghazi-attack-10-days-in-advance/>

gun-running operations in either Libya or Syria, it is unlikely that they knew nothing about these campaigns.

One senior Senator who made a very public show of his backing for the Libyan al-Qa'eda rebels was Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Senator John McCain (R-AZ). He was in personal contact with the rebels from mid-March 2011, and visited Benghazi twice with Special Envoy Christopher Stevens: once on 22 April 2011 and again in July 2012. Perhaps clueless about whom they were, he posed for photo ops with the al-Qa'eda fighters, gushing, "These are my heroes" and, "I have met with these brave fighters, and they are not Al-Qaeda. To the contrary: They are Libyan patriots who want to liberate their nation. We should help them do it."<sup>56</sup> He then used his Senate Armed Services Chairmanship position to do just that. No doubt introduced by Special Envoy Stevens, one of the Libyan militia leaders he met with was career jihadist Abdelhakim Belhadj, pictured here with McCain and Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC).



### **Aegis Group, Blue Mountain & Mission Security**

One of the murkiest areas of the entire Benghazi debacle relates to the security guard arrangements at the SMC. It is of concern not just because of the failure of the local hire 17 February Martyrs Brigade members to defend the mission the night of the attack, but because of possible connections to a British-based security contractor, Aegis Group, whose U.S. subsidiary,

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<sup>56</sup> "McCain Calls for More Military Support to Anti-Qaddafi Forces During Libya Visit," *Fox News*, April 22, 2011. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2011/04/22/mccain-travels-libya-meet-rebel-forces.html>



Aegis Defense Services, LLC, was headed by Kristi Rogers, wife of Representative Mike Rogers (R-MI). Mike Rogers became Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) in January 2011.

Before her 2007 marriage to Rogers, Kristi Clemens had been serving as an Assistant Commissioner of Public Affairs for U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the Department of Homeland Security. She then moved into the private sector in 2006 after being hired as President and CEO by Aegis Defense Services. She held this position until 2011, when she was made Vice Chairman of the Board of Aegis Defense Services, LLC. John South took over as CEO. Rogers is credited with helping Aegis Defense Services to win part of a major Department of State/Bureau of Diplomatic Security Worldwide Protective Services, five-year, \$10 billion contract in October 2010.

In response to reports that Aegis was linked to the Blue Mountain Group, however, Aegis issued a statement specifically denying any contract for U.S. government work in Libya, saying that no “member of the Aegis Group has ever entered into a contract with any department of the U.S. government to perform work in Libya.”<sup>57</sup> VXL Enterprises, LLC of Alexandria, VA, however, did win a contract as subcontractor to Aegis Defense Services, LLC to train security personnel at various stateside locations (including Arkansas and New Mexico) under the October 2010 WPS Department of State contract. VXL’s majority owner is Matt Crouse.<sup>58</sup> Of note is the fact that Matt Crouse and John South, the latter of whom became CEO of Aegis Defense Services, LLC in 2011, are well-known to one another and move in the same federal security contractor circles. South earlier served as Vice President of Security Services for EOD Technology, Inc. (EODT), which, in 2011, lost a Department of State contract to provide security to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan after controversy over allegedly lax hiring practices that included Afghan guards accused of providing information to Iran.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Morrison, Micah, “Unraveling Benghazi: Is Mike Rogers Part Of The Problem?,” *The Daily Caller*, 06/17/2014. <http://dailycaller.com/2014/06/17/unraveling-benghazi-is-mike-rogers-part-of-the-problem/?print=1>

<sup>58</sup> VXL Enterprises, LLC - 3213 Duke St, Alexandria, VA 22314 - Phone: (202) 449-3824 - <http://vxlenterprises.com/>

<sup>59</sup> “Federal Agents Raid the Headquarters of EOD Technology, Inc., a Security Contractor in Iraq and Afghanistan, for Suspected ITAR Violations,” December 2010. <http://documents.jdsupra.com/732e002d-0614-470e-8976-877d02b7b198.pdf>

One Aegis subsidiary, Aegis Advisory, definitely was working in Libya, collecting information and providing it to Strategic Forecasting (STRATFOR), the global intelligence and consulting firm. “Aegis has been operating in Libya since February 2011,” noted an Aegis Advisory intelligence report aimed at corporate clients. The report, marked “Confidential,” notes the company’s ability to provide “proprietary information [and] expert knowledge from our country team based in Tripoli.”<sup>60</sup> Richard Ayton, director at Aegis Advisory, travelled to Benghazi in April and May 2011 to collect information about the evolving security situation there.<sup>61</sup> Sidney Blumenthal is reported to have relied upon Aegis for some of his own information that he shared on a regular basis with Secretary of State Clinton. No word on whether former CIA officer Tyler Drumheller, upon whom Blumenthal is said to have depended, was affiliated with any element of Aegis.

The Wales-based Blue Mountain Group, hired by the State Department to provide security at the SMC, received the necessary no-objection certificate from the new Libyan authorities sometime in the second half of 2011, and reportedly joined forces in November 2011 with a local private intelligence outfit, the Eclipse Group, run by former CIA officer Duane “Dewey” Clarridge.<sup>62</sup> The two parted ways by the spring of 2012 in unclear circumstances. Blue Mountain was run by a former member of the British special forces named David Nigel Thomas. The State Department contract with Blue Mountain took effect in March 2012, but it soon appeared that the company was ill-prepared to manage the SMC security and likely was hired out of expediency more than anything else (because it already had an established presence there). Security practices reportedly were slipshod. For example, trained Blue Mt. team members with previous experience were fired, and new local hire guards with no prior security experience were given only minimal training and patrolled the compound carrying only batons and flashlights.<sup>63</sup> Worse yet, many of the new Blue Mt. hires were directly affiliated with Ansar al-Sharia and other local jihadist militias.

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<sup>60</sup> VXL Enterprises, LLC

<sup>61</sup> [https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/28/2897146\\_alpha-fwd-fw-aegis-advisory-libya-briefing-.html](https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/28/2897146_alpha-fwd-fw-aegis-advisory-libya-briefing-.html)

<sup>62</sup> “Security firms hustle in lawless Libya,” *UPI*, December 9, 2011. [http://www.upi.com/Business\\_News/Security-Industry/2011/12/09/Security-firms-hustle-in-lawless-Libya/UPI-75871323450621/](http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2011/12/09/Security-firms-hustle-in-lawless-Libya/UPI-75871323450621/)

<sup>63</sup> Zakaria, Tabassum, Susan Cornwell and Hadeel al Shalchi, “For Benghazi diplomatic security, U.S. relied on small British firm,” *Reuters*, October 17, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-usa-bluemountain-idUSBRE89G1TI20121018>

As noted earlier in the section on the SMC Emergency Plan, defense of the mission in any real security contingency depended on backup from a Quick Reaction Force from the local 17 February Martyrs Brigade. A short background on this group is in order. However dependable and loyal its members may have seemed when first hired and trained by DSS officers at the SMC in late 2011, it is nevertheless useful to recall how, and under what circumstances, this militia began. As Diana West recounted in an 11 October 2012 posting at her blogsite,<sup>64</sup> the Libyan revolution kicked off with a “Day of Rage” on 17 February 2011. That date was significant because it was the fifth anniversary of an attack on the Italian Consulate in Benghazi that took place on 17 February 2006. A few days earlier, Roberto Calderoli, an Italian minister, in an act of free speech solidarity with the Danish cartoonists “dramatically unbuttoned his shirt to reveal a T-shirt featuring a cartoon of Muhammad.” Referring to Muslims then rioting around the world, he said, “When they recognize our rights, I’ll take off this shirt.”

Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Prime Minister, bowing to Islamic Law, forced him to resign from his post the next day, but that wasn’t enough for Islam, and violent mobs attacked the Italian mission the next day. Libyan security forces responded with tear gas and ultimately live fire to protect the Italian diplomats inside, killing eleven attackers.<sup>65</sup> The security team hired to protect the U.S. mission took their name from these “martyrs.” Members’ Facebook pages were filled with images of armed jihadi fighters, the black flag of jihad that features the *shuhada*, or statement of Islamic faith, and open statements of support for Ansar al-Shariah, the al-Qa’eda-linked group into which the 17 February Martyrs Brigade folded during 2012. Its very name means “Supporters of Shariah.”<sup>66</sup> Ansar al-Shariah would later be accused of directing the deadly attack on the SMC.

This, then, was the scenario as the summer of 2012 moved towards September. To recap, the Obama administration had provided material support to Libyan al-Qa’eda and Muslim Brotherhood jihadis to overthrow Muammar Qaddafi’s regime in October 2011. The country had dissolved into complete chaos by 2012, awash with jihadist militias and large quantities of

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<sup>64</sup> West, Diana, “Benghazi’s Real Scandal? Uncle Sam Joined the Jihad.”

<sup>65</sup> Diana West

<sup>66</sup> Rosenthal, John, “Newsmax Exclusive: US Hired al-Qaida-Linked Group to Defend Benghazi Mission,” *Newsmax*, 2 May 2013. <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/benghazi-consulate-protected-alqaida/2013/05/02/id/502565/>

weapons, including thousands of SAMs, which the CIA Annex in Benghazi attempted to buy off the market, shipping them to jihadist rebels in Syria. Former U.S. Envoy to the Libyan rebels Christopher Stevens was now Ambassador to Libya. However, the dangerously insecure Special Mission Compound (SMC) in Benghazi was protected by an unprofessional team of local hire guards, supposedly supplemented by militia members from a jihadist group called the 17 February Martyrs Brigade, whose very name should have raised an alarm. 2012 was a presidential re-election year, though, and mounting security concerns in Libya were systematically brushed off by a politicized State Department, more concerned with politics than American lives in jeopardy.

### **Warnings Ignored**

Despite Obama administration assertions that the Benghazi attacks were spontaneous, and therefore unpredictable, there were in fact multiple indicators and warnings that should have alerted the U.S. government, and particularly the State Department, that an attack was coming. It cannot be emphasized enough how intentional was the administration's failure to respond with either the closure of the Benghazi SMC or substantial upgrades in physical as well as personnel security there, and the pre-positioning of contingency military forces near North Africa. Already mentioned earlier in this report was a series of attacks against Western targets in Benghazi, most of which subsequently pulled out. As noted, the Libyan government itself had announced on its national television channel, Libya TV, that it was placing Benghazi on a "state of maximum alert" because of that violence.<sup>67</sup>

To begin with the obvious, the 11 September date is an annual occasion for possible Islamic terrorism that ought to warrant an increased security posture in and of itself. Additional information is available from the GRS team members at the CIA Annex who have now gone public with their experiences in a book (*13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*<sup>68</sup>), a movie ("*13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi*"), and numerous media appearances. At least two weeks before the 11 September 2012 attack, recruited assets of the Benghazi CIA Base of Operations (the "Annex") reported that an attack was "imminent," but

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<sup>67</sup> STRATFOR, "Libya: State Of Emergency Announced In Benghazi"

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.amazon.com/13-Hours-Account-Happened-Benghazi/dp/1455582271>

was non-specific as to exact target or timing. According to the GRS team members, printed paper warning notices about the impending attack were affixed to the walls at the Annex from that point onward. The paper warning notices were removed from the walls at the end of every day and re-posted the next day. Another intelligence report dated 10 September 2012 warned of an attack by Ansar al-Shariah within the next 24 hours against unspecified Libyan official targets, but not the U.S. mission. This information was conveyed to Ambassador Stevens, who visited the Annex the night of 10 September. It was repeated to him again the following morning when John Tiegen, one of the GRS team members, went over to the SMC to brief the Ambassador and to offer SMC Americans safe haven at the Annex. The Ambassador refused the co-location offer.

On 18 May 2015, Judicial Watch reported receipt of more than 100 pages of previously classified documents from the Departments of Defense and State. According to information contained in one of those, a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) memo dated 12 September 2012 (the day after the attack), the attack was planned ten or more days before 11 September 2012 in revenge for the mid-2012 CIA drone killing in the Afghan-Pakistan region of Abu Yahya al-Libi, the Libyan deputy to AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, and in commemoration of the original 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center. The heavily redacted Defense Department “information report” says that the attack on the Benghazi facility “was planned and executed by the al-Qa’eda and Muslim Brotherhood-linked Brigades of the Captive Omar Abdul Rahman (BCOAR)” and that the group sought “to kill as many Americans as possible.” The document was sent to then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Obama White House National Security Council.<sup>69</sup>

CNN reported that BCOAR had first surfaced in Libya in May 2012, when it claimed responsibility for an attack against the International Red Cross office in Benghazi. Then in June 2012, the group claimed responsibility for detonating an explosive device outside the SMC and

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<sup>69</sup> “Judicial Watch: Defense, State Department Documents Reveal Obama Administration Knew that al Qaeda Terrorists Had Planned Benghazi Attack 10 Days in Advance,” May 18, 2015. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/press-releases/judicial-watch-defense-state-department-documents-reveal-obama-administration-knew-that-al-qaeda-terrorists-had-planned-benghazi-attack-10-days-in-advance/>

later released a video of that attack.<sup>70</sup> Although it was later established that Ansar al-Shariah, rather than the BCOAR group, was responsible for the 11-12 September 2012 attack against the SMC, BCOAR's previous attacks made it a prime suspect early on.

For all the misplaced attention it's garnered, the YouTube video, "Innocence of Muslims," failed along with every other indicator and warning to prod the Obama administration to step up security in the days and hours leading up to the 11 September 2012 attack. With Mohamed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood government triumphantly in power next door in Egypt, relations with the U.S government had never been so good. Morsi reasonably could have expected that one of his key requests—the release of Omar Abdel-Rahman (the "Blind Sheikh") from U.S. prison—would soon be granted. An Egyptian delegation led by Hani Nour Eldin, a Gama'at al-Islamiyya official and Egyptian Member of Parliament, had been received on 21 June 2012 by senior National Security Council official Denis McDonough so that he could present the request in person. This was then followed up by a 2 August 2012 formal request from the Cairo government. Just to be sure, though, on 30 August, Gama'at al-Islamiyya called for 11 September 2012 protests at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo.

Little noticed at the time, on 2 July 2012, the trailer to the "Innocence of Muslims" was posted online but got minimal views over the next two months. The "Blind Sheikh" was still the key issue for Egyptian Muslims leading right up to early September 2012. But then on September 9, an Egyptian TV talk show host aired portions of the "Innocence of Muslims" video trailer, inviting Muslim outrage; the Grand Mufti of Al-Azhar quickly obliged with a statement of condemnation for "insulting the prophet." Immediately, social media erupted and Cairo Embassy phone lines were jammed with callers calling in to protest. The focus had shifted overnight from the Blind Sheikh to this video and Muslim anger was building across the world—but no one seemed to be paying attention in Washington, DC.

Despite this dangerously escalating situation, no warnings went out from either the State Department or the Defense Department and no military assets were moved closer to potential

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<sup>70</sup> Robertson, Nic, Paul Cruickshank and Tim Lister, "Pro-al Qaeda group seen behind deadly Benghazi attack," *CNN*, September 13, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/12/world/africa/libya-attack-jihadists/>

flash points in Egypt, North Africa, or the Middle East in general. In fact, in what must count as one of the worst judgment calls of the entire sorry episode, all the regional Combatant Commanders were summoned back to Washington, D.C. for meetings...the week of 9/11. Thus, none of them was at his post when the Muslim world blew up and Americans came under attack in Benghazi, Libya.

There was another video that's rarely mentioned but that likely gave the green light to the 11 September 2012 attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi. On September 10, al-Qa'eda released a video (mentioned by DIA above) in which its leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, explicitly called for revenge against Americans in Libya for the death of his deputy, the Libyan jihadi, Abu Yahya al-Libi.

Finally, on the morning of September 11, a Blue Mountain guard informed the Diplomatic Security agents at the Special Mission Compound that a man in a police uniform was on the roof of a nearby building taking photographs of the complex. The policeman was supposed to be part of the Libyan police unit sent to protect the mission. His marked police car was parked nearby. The incident was written up sometime during the day on 11 September, apparently intended for delivery to the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It expressed disappointment with the level of police protection being provided.<sup>71</sup> Sean Smith, a State Department Information Officer on Temporary Duty (TDY) at the SMC, was an avid online gamer. Aware of this unsettling incident, he wrote to his online friends only hours before the attack began, "Assuming we don't die tonight. We saw one of our 'police' that guard the compound taking pictures."<sup>72</sup>

Into this gathering storm, when red warning flags should have been flying everywhere, Ambassador Chris Stevens arrived in Benghazi, Libya on 10 September 2012. Although he had been tasked by Secretary Clinton to conduct an assessment about whether the Benghazi mission could be upgraded to full diplomatic status, he'd also come to Benghazi at the specific invitation of his close friend, Abu Bakr Habib, Director of the new American Corner, which Stevens was going to open at a local Benghazi school. The CCB has reporting that Abu Bakr Habib played

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<sup>71</sup> *Foreign Policy*, <http://foreignpolicy.com/slideshow/what-we-found-in-benghazi/>

<sup>72</sup> Beckhusen, Robert, "Diplomat Killed in Libya Told Fellow Gamers: Hope I 'Don't Die Tonight'," *Wired*, 09/12/12. <https://www.wired.com/2012/09/vilerat/>

another role for the U.S. mission: that he served as the State Department’s liaison to the 17 February Martyrs Brigade. He certainly made no secret about where his sympathies lie and they weren’t with his government.

Interviewed by *Politico* for a June 2015 article,<sup>73</sup> Habib openly identified with the jihadist rebels who’d initiated the uprising in Benghazi, clearly pleased that “In four days *we* got rid of the whole regime in the eastern part of the country” (emphasis added). He described the scene in Benghazi after the United Nations declared a no-fly zone and there were huge celebrations. “American flags were flying everywhere, everywhere,” Habib said. Clearly happy about where U.S. State Department sympathies lie, he added, “I can’t tell you how grateful I am to the State Department for saving our city that day.” This is the man who invited Chris Stevens to come to Benghazi, where he was murdered by the very jihadis with whom both he and Abu Bakr identified so closely. After the Benghazi attack, Abu Bakr Habib and his family were evacuated out of Libya and brought to the U.S., where (as of late October 2015) he worked at the Libyan Embassy in Washington, DC (located next to the Watergate Hotel).

As described by Diana West,<sup>74</sup> Habib was not the only Libyan in whom the Americans placed suicidally misguided trust. A cable drafted by David C. McFarland, signed by Christopher Stevens and dispatched on 11 September 2012 from the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, describes a September 9 meeting between U.S. diplomats and “local area militia commanders Wissam bin Ahmed [*sic*, Hamid], Commander Libya Shield 1) and Muhammad al-Garabi (Commander, Rafa’ al-Sahti Brigade and Libya Shield 2).”<sup>75</sup> They discussed “fluid relationships” and “blurry lines” that defined membership in various Benghazi jihadist militias, including the 17 February Martyrs Brigade, Libya Shield (*Katiba Dir’ Libya* in Arabic) and the Supreme Security Council (a post-Qaddafi government umbrella group). They admitted to being members of multiple brigades at the same time. Libya Shield, of course, was an openly jihadist militia that fought under the black flag of jihad during the revolution, as explained by John Rosenthal shortly after

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<sup>73</sup> Barholet, Jeff and Michael Hirsh, “Beyond Benghazi: Hillary, Sid and Libya,” *Politico*, June 14, 2015. <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/hillary-clinton-2016-benghazi-118992>

<sup>74</sup> West, Diana, “Meet Wissam bin Hamid, Uncle Sam’s Jihadist Security Officer,” October 24, 2012. <http://dianawest.net/Home/tabid/36/EntryId/2290/Meet-Wissam-bin-Hamid-Uncle-Sams-Jihadist-Security-Officer.aspx>

<sup>75</sup> “Benghazi Weekly Report–11 September 2012” was placed online by the House Oversight Committee. <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/9-11-12-Memo.pdf>



the Benghazi attack. Bin Hamid, in fact, “commanded the rebel forces that besieged Qaddafi’s hometown of Sirte and ultimately captured and killed him. Per a glowing biography of bin Hamid that appeared on the jihadist forum al-Fetn.com, he is a veteran of jihad in both Iraq and Afghanistan.” And last, but not least, Rosenthal tells us that Arabic-language jihadi websites carried a declaration by Libya Shield commander Wissam bin Hamid just days after the killing of Muammar Qaddafi, stating that “The Islamic shariah is a red line, we will not cede one rule of it, and Islam is the only law-giver and not [merely] the foundation [of the law].”<sup>76</sup>

It is unlikely that U.S. diplomatic personnel in Libya were unfamiliar with bin Hamid or his jihadist ideology and biography. Nevertheless, they were not only meeting openly with him two days before the key 9/11 date, but calmly discussing his and other jihadist militias’ roles in post-Qaddafi Benghazi. In the course of the discussion, these jihadi militia commanders baldly “criticized the USG for ‘supporting’ National Forces Alliance (NFA) leader and Prime Minister candidate Mahmoud Jibril. If Jibril won, they said, they would not continue to guarantee security in Benghazi...”<sup>77</sup>

In sum, then, on the eve of the jihadist attack against the U.S. mission in Benghazi, everyone involved—Ambassador Christopher Stevens, other U.S. Embassy personnel in both Tripoli and Benghazi, the U.S. Intelligence Community (including at the CIA Annex in Benghazi), the State Department, the Department of Defense, the White House—was completely unprepared for the Islamic terror that soon would be unleashed on all of them. This was in large measure it seems, because they lacked an understanding of who was whom amidst the Libyan chaos, but especially because they did not comprehend the ideological forces of Islamic jihad and shariah that drove the very people upon whom they were depending for information and security.

### **The Gathering Storm**

Shortly before the Benghazi SMC was stormed, Ambassador Stevens had a dinner meeting there with Ali Sait Akin, the Turkish Consul General in Benghazi. Whether they were discussing the weapons pipeline from Benghazi to Turkey and Syria is not publicly known. There is some

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<sup>76</sup> Rosenthal, John, “BENGHAZI: MARINES ‘SUPPORTED’ BY JIHADISTS,” *WND*, 10/16/2012. <http://www.wnd.com/2012/10/benghazi-marines-supported-by-jihadists/>

<sup>77</sup> “Benghazi Weekly Report” cable

discrepancy about the time of that dinner meeting, with the State Department timeline showing it lasted from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Libya time (1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time) the evening of September 11, 2012. Akin himself told Diana West<sup>78</sup> that it went from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Libya time. (12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Eastern time) The difference is key, because according to *Associated Press* reporting, some 150 bearded Ansar al-Shariah militia men set up a blocking cordon with checkpoints all around the U.S. mission compound, with vehicles bearing the Ansar al-Shariah logo “around nightfall” (which was about 8 p.m. in Benghazi at that time of year), after which neighbors told reporters they were unable to move in or out of the area.<sup>79</sup> If that account is true, then the Turkish diplomat would have had to pass through the blockade on his way out of the neighborhood after the dinner with Stevens—but he didn’t call and sent no warning back to the American mission that was soon to be overrun. Those roadblocks would prove deadly to the CIA Annex team later that night as they tried to evacuate the survivors from the SMC back to the Annex.

A footnote: State Department documents obtained in April 2016 by Judicial Watch confirm the astonishing information that Turkey served as the “protecting power” for U.S. personnel in Libya after the 2011 closure of the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli. The night of the September 2012 attack, the Turkish Ambassador to Libya and the Turkish Consul General in Benghazi (Ali Sait Akin) reportedly “engaged with Libyan officials and provided details of the attack, and the Consul offered to shelter any Americans at his residence in Benghazi.”<sup>80</sup>

### **The Attack Unfolds**

Under normal circumstances, the host nation is responsible for providing security for the diplomatic facilities of sending states. In circumstances like Libya’s, when the country is in a state of civil war and collapse, however, and the government is unable or unwilling to fulfill this obligation, the State Department must depend on a layered approach beyond what the host nation

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<sup>78</sup> West, Diana, “Benghazi: The Turkish Timeline,” December 13, 2012. <http://www.dianawest.net/BlogArchive/tabid/56/EntryId/2345/Benghazi-The-Turkish-Timeline.aspx>

<sup>79</sup> Michael, Maggie and Paul Schemm, “Libyan witnesses recount organized Benghazi attack,” *The Associated Press*, October 27, 2012. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/libyan-witnesses-recount-organized-benghazi-attack>

<sup>80</sup> Judicial Watch: New Benghazi Documents Reveal September 11, 2012, Hillary Clinton ‘Call Sheet’ Describes Benghazi Assault as Attack by ‘Armed Extremists’, *Judicial Watch*, April 25, 2016. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/press-releases/judicial-watch-new-benghazi-documents-reveal-september-11-2012-hillary-clinton-call-sheet-describes-benghazi-assault-as-attack-by-armed-extremists/>

may provide. That layered defense system may include armed Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) agents from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, hardened facilities, U.S.-trained and/or -contracted local security guards, and sometimes U.S. Marine Security Guard detachments. As we know, in Benghazi in September 2012, every one of these elements either failed or was simply not present.

According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2015 document, “The National Military Strategy of the United States of America,”<sup>81</sup> protection of U.S. citizens abroad is one of the enumerated National Security Interests for which the U.S. military is responsible. As this mission statement explains, “the U.S. military sustains ready forces around the world to defend our citizens and protect diplomatic facilities.”<sup>82</sup> Except on the night of 11-12 September 2012, it would seem.

Within minutes of the attack against the Benghazi SMC that began sometime around 9:23 p.m. Libya time (3:23 p.m. Eastern Time), Ambassador Stevens notified his Deputy Chief of Mission in Tripoli, Greg Hicks, telling him, “We’re being attacked.” Hicks then immediately notified the State Department. Alec Henderson, the State Department communications officer on duty at the SMC, used a special communications network called the “Alpha-10” communications channel to contact the CIA Annex to report they were “under attack.” GRS member Kris (“Tanto”) Paronto has described receiving that call. The Alpha-10 channel is a highly classified communications channel that is only used by U.S. diplomatic, intelligence, and military representatives in the field to transmit exceptionally urgent information. Transmissions over the Alpha-10 channel are automatically received at the top levels of U.S. national security in Washington, DC. Additionally, each American and all vehicles at the SMC were supposed to be equipped with “Blue Force Tracker” devices, which also would have been activated in an emergency like this.

As noted earlier, four out of the five DSS agents assigned to the SMC to protect Ambassador Stevens, the mission, and any sensitive materials kept there, were all unarmed at the time of the attack. While the one armed agent hustled the Ambassador and Sean Smith into Villa C’s safe haven, the others were unable to get to their gear and weapons kept in the main building called

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<sup>81</sup> Joint Chief of Staff, “The National Military Strategy of the United States of America,” June 2015. [http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015\\_National\\_Military\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*

“the accommodation block” before dozens of attackers swarmed into the compound. They therefore abandoned the Emergency Plan and took cover.<sup>83</sup>

In any case, suffice to say that every relevant Operations Room and Situation Room in the U.S. government would have learned within minutes that the American mission in Benghazi was under attack. The Department of Defense, Pentagon, and Combatant Commanders all would have received the word, again, within minutes.

Tyrone (“Rone”) Woods and the rest of the GRS team at the CIA Annex in Benghazi, approximately 1.2 miles from the SMC, immediately requested permission from the Chief of Base (COB), identified publicly only as ‘Bob’, who was their direct superior on site, to go to the aid of Ambassador Stevens at the SMC. ‘Bob’ was on the telephone, likely with the CIA Chief of Station in Tripoli, but also apparently trying to raise the 17 February Martyrs Brigade. ‘Bob’ told the GRS team to stay put and refused them permission to go to the aid of Ambassador Stevens at the SMC. He insisted that it was the job of the 17 February Martyrs Brigade, commanded in Benghazi by Fawzi Bukhatif, to defend the SMC. Tanto also requested U.S. military air support, specifically for an unmanned ISR drone (for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) and an AC-130 *Spectre* gunship, a four-engine, fixed-wing plane designed for lethal ground assaults.<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., AFRICOM Commander Carter Ham (at the Pentagon along with all the other Combatant Commanders) learned of the attack within fifteen minutes of its onset and notified Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin E. Dempsey. These latter two then met with President Obama in the Oval Office. Precisely what, if anything, Obama’s orders were to his senior defense staff has never been made clear. Within the same timeframe, the State Department Ops Center informed Secretary Clinton’s Chief of Staff Cheryl Mills that the U.S. mission in Benghazi was under attack by scores of armed men. Within the first 30 minutes after the attack began, AFRICOM ordered a drone surveillance aircraft to move from Derna to Benghazi to position itself over the SMC; it took

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<sup>83</sup> Stephen, *The Guardian*

<sup>84</sup> “13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi”

more than an hour to reach Benghazi, but from some time shortly after 2300 onwards, it and a second back-up drone sent later provided live visual coverage of what was happening on the ground back to Washington, D.C.,<sup>85</sup> where it was watched in real time by senior members of the White House national security team, Departments of Defense and State, and within the Intelligence Community. The CCB formally requested this video feed be released in a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) submission in 2014 but to date none of that live footage has been seen by anyone outside the U.S. government.

At the Benghazi Annex, the GRS team had collected their gear and weapons within minutes, loaded up into two Level 7 armored vehicles—a black Mercedes Benz and a black BMW—and waited for permission to go. Minutes passed and finally John (“Tig”) Tiegen yelled out to “Bob,” “Hey, we gotta go now! We’re losing the initiative!” But “Bob” yelled back, “No, stand down, you need to wait.”<sup>86</sup>

Then Tanto received a second phone call from Henderson at the SMC at 9:45 p.m. Libya time (3:45 p.m. Eastern time). “Bob” once again refused them permission to go to the SMC. The third phone call came at 9:55 p.m. Libya time (3:55 p.m. Eastern time) when Henderson told Tanto, “The building is on fire. We’re going to die if help doesn’t come.” At that point, Woods, Tanto, four other GRS members and a Libyan national translator employee decided to ignore the COB’s orders, drove out of the Annex compound, and headed to the SMC.<sup>87</sup>

The situation at the SMC was increasingly desperate. Dozens of attackers armed with assault rifles and RPGs swarming throughout the compound and Villa C, where the Ambassador, Sean Smith, and DS agent Scott Wickland were close to asphyxiation from the fire. Thinking Stevens and Smith were behind him, Wickland opened the barred escape window from inside the villa’s safe room, and went outside. The car that was supposed to be kept there for emergency evacuation wasn’t there and Stevens and Smith had not followed him out. DS agents were

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<sup>85</sup> “13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi”

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*

barricaded in various rooms in the TOC and elsewhere, but not putting up any resistance to the attackers.<sup>88</sup>

As the Annex GRS team approached the SMC, there was a great deal of confusion and they realized that 17 February Martyrs Brigade militiamen were milling about an intersection taking heavy gunfire from the SMC as well as the Ansar al-Shariah-occupied house next door. No return gunfire came from the SMC and the militiamen seemed unsure of what to do. The GRS team quickly went on the offensive and cleared the SMC of attackers. They were able to locate and remove Sean Smith's lifeless body from inside the villa that was still on fire. They also located and escorted out six persons including the DSS guards who were found hiding in safe rooms. They were unable to locate Ambassador Stevens. The DSS guards told them that the 17 February Martyrs Brigade guards had opened the SMC gates to the attackers, then either fled or joined in the attack themselves.<sup>89</sup>

The GRS team reported killing some 23 attackers at the SMC before they departed. Some 40 to 50 17 February militia members eventually made their way inside the SMC, provided some support, and warned them the attackers they'd just cleared out were likely to return. So, the team recovered as much sensitive hard copy material as they could and brought the papers back to the Annex where they were burned. Tanto recalled that just before leaving the SMC, a 17 February militiaman approached him and handed him a BlackBerry smartphone covered in soot. Later, back at the Annex, Tanto gave the phone to COB "Bob," but whose phone that was or what happened to it later is not known to either Tanto or the CCB. (Separately, a different source reported that an attacker's cell phone had been recovered at the SMC, was delivered to the appropriate U.S. intelligence agency, and exploited for considerable information about the jihadist networks in Benghazi.) Once back at the Annex and under continuous fire, the GRS team took up positions on the roofs of three Annex compound buildings from where they could see a long line of some 15 cars approaching the Annex. Tanto was the GRS team leader and he

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*

remained in continuous communications contact over the Alpha-10 system to relay coordinates and information.<sup>90</sup>

### **The Rescue That Never Came**

Facing wave after wave of attackers, the Annex defenders fought on for hours, eventually killing some 107 of them, while being credited with saving the lives of 27 people at the SMC and Annex. The DOD surveillance drone did not arrive over the Annex until sometime after 11 p.m. Libya time (after 5:00 p.m. Eastern time). Although two AC-130 *Spectre* gunships were “on call” that night—one a six-hour flight away in Djibouti and the other at Naval Air Station Sigonella in Sicily, Italy (just 1 hour and 45 minutes flying time away)—no official U.S. military assistance was ever given the “Go” order to at least attempt to go to the aid of these brave Americans fighting and dying through the night, knowing they’d been abandoned by the government that sent them in harm’s way.<sup>91</sup>

The issue was not just that no U.S. military force was ordered to speed immediately and directly to Benghazi to at least attempt a rescue, but that no U.S. military forces had been pre-positioned ahead of time to ensure their ready availability in such a crisis. Given the myriad warnings described earlier that should have compelled every military commander in the MENA region to go on high alert and pro-actively move forces closer to the North African coastline, none did. Even absent a specific order from AFRICOM or the Pentagon, a responsible Combatant Commander, especially one with air assets like F-16s or tanker refueling aircraft under his command, with a forward-leaning ready attitude, would have used his given authority and taken the initiative to move forces closer to where he knew or should have known there was likely to be trouble. Why none did remains an outstanding question that demands accountability.

Who in Washington, D.C. was ultimately responsible for this catastrophic dereliction of duty remains one of the most closely-guarded secrets of the entire disgraceful story. Not one of a gaggle of Congressional Committees even posed the question, much less obtained a satisfactory

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>91</sup> Timmerman, Kenneth R., “HILLARY’S BENGHAZI STAND-DOWN ORDER EXPOSED,” *Front Page Magazine*, January 13, 2016. <http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/261442/hillarys-benghazi-stand-down-order-exposed-kenneth-r-timmerman>

answer. What is known, once again thanks to Judicial Watch, is that then-DOD Chief of Staff Jeremy Bash sent an email to State Department leadership at 1919 Eastern Time, a few hours after the attack had begun in Benghazi. In the email, Bash says “we have identified the forces that could move to Benghazi. They are spinning up as we speak.”<sup>92</sup> Details of the military forces available were redacted by the Obama administration in this message that was deliberately hidden for years—perhaps because it so directly contradicts the sworn testimony given by then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta before the Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2013. In response to questioning about the lack of a military response, Secretary Panetta claimed that “time, distance, the lack of an adequate warning, events that moved very quickly on the ground prevented a more immediate response.”<sup>93</sup> As we now know, there is very little in that reply that is actually true.

Even more disappointing was the un-redacted version of the Jeremy Bash DOD email that had been withheld from the public by the House Select Committee on Benghazi, which subsequently released, specified that there was “a SOF element that was in Croatia (which can fly to Souda Bay, Crete), and a Marine FAST team out of Rota, Spain.” The 65-member FAST (Marine Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team) at Naval Station Rota received an initial phone call from the Secretary of Defense’s office at eight minutes past midnight the night of 11-12 September. Orders to be ready to deploy didn’t come until 2:34 a.m. Libya time (8:34 p.m. Eastern time) to fly to Tripoli with possible onward orders to Benghazi. In addition to having to wait nearly another ten hours, until 12:04 p.m. Libya time (6:04 a.m. Eastern time), on 12 September for a C-130 transport plane to get to Rota from Ramstein AFB in Germany to pick them up, though, they were then delayed an additional 64 minutes by revised orders from AFRICOM to deplane, go home and change out of their uniforms (earlier explicitly authorized by VADM Charles J. Leidig, Deputy AFRICOM commander) into civilian clothing.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> “Judicial Watch: New Benghazi Email Shows DOD Offered State Department “Forces that Could Move to Benghazi” Immediately—Specifics Blacked Out in New Document,” December 08, 2015. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/press-releases/judicial-watch-new-benghazi-email-shows-dod-offered-state-department-forces-that-could-move-to-benghazi-immediately-specifics-blacked-out-in-new-document/>

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>94</sup> “REPORT of the U.S. SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE REVIEW of the TERRORIST ATTACKS ON U.S. FACILITIES IN BENGHAZI, LIBYA, SEPTEMBER 11–12, 2012”, <https://www.congress.gov/113/crpt/srpt134/CRPT-113srpt134.pdf>



The action in Benghazi was long since over by that time, but the Rota FAST situation highlights once again two egregious examples of the dereliction of duty by an administration and military command not only ill-prepared to respond to a crisis of their own making but also still concerned more for appearances than efficacy (even in the middle of a full-blown emergency with American lives in the balance). As the timeline shows, the Rota FAST team never made it to Benghazi at all and instead flew belatedly to Tripoli, Libya, where they arrived after all the fighting was over.<sup>95</sup> The 40-man Special Operations Airborne European Commander in Extremis Force (CIF) that AFRICOM commander Gen. Carter Ham ordered to NAS Sigonella from a training mission in Croatia didn't get there until 7:57 p.m. Libya time (1:57 p.m. Eastern Time) on 12 September (nearly 22 hours after the attack began). According to Fox News, a 12-member alert force (part of the CIF) who were staged to NAS Sigonella from Croatia arrived there within only several hours of being alerted to the attack "but were not given permission to move into Libya."<sup>96</sup>

Two squadrons of F-16 fighter jets assigned to the 31<sup>st</sup> Air Force Fighter Wing are maintained at Aviano AB in northern Italy. Among other possible armaments, they each carry a 20 mm (0.787 in) M61A1 Vulcan cannon for close range aerial combat and strafing. The flying distance from Aviano AB to Naval Air Station Sigonella is 610 miles. From Sigonella to Benghazi is another 468 miles. Cruising speed is around 577 mph (or a bit more at an altitude of 37,000 feet) and the F-16's combat radius configured with four external fuel tanks and no bombs could be as much as a total of 1,300 nautical miles. During the 2011 Libyan civil war, almost 4,000 combat sorties against Libya were flown out of NAS Sigonella.<sup>97</sup>

Within the U.S. Defense Department, the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) is responsible for providing air, land, and sea transportation. The 618th Air Operations Center (Tanker Airlift Control Center-TACC), stationed at Scott Air Force Base, IL, is a USAF unit assigned to Air Mobility Command's Eighteenth Air Force (18AF/AFTRANS) and, among other

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<sup>95</sup> Housley, Adam and Jennifer Griffin, "Facts and questions about what happened in Benghazi," *Fox News*, January 22, 2013. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/01/22/facts-and-questions-about-what-happened-in-benghazi.html>

<sup>96</sup> Housley, Adam and Jennifer Griffin, "Facts and questions about what happened in Benghazi," *Fox News*, January 22, 2013. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/01/22/facts-and-questions-about-what-happened-in-benghazi.html>

<sup>97</sup> "Benghazi—The Mystery of the Missing Air Support," *Passion for Liberty*, June 16, 2013. <http://www.passionforliberty.com/2013/06/16/benghazi-the-mystery-of-the-missing-air-support/>

things, is responsible for aerial refueling operations around the world. Any orders to provide tanker refueling support to F-16 aircraft the night of 11-12 September 2012 would have had to come from the Pentagon to the TACC. According to CCB sources, however, there were no orders given the entire night for any such action.

F-16 pilots at Aviano AB in Italy were activated, at least to a readiness status. According to what one of the pilots at Aviano AB told *Fox News*, the night of 11 September 2012, his squadron got the alert that a “real world mission was going down...[t]hat flight line was full of people, and we were all ready to go” to Benghazi. They only needed the order to “Go.” The order never came. “The whole night we were told that we are waiting on a call,” he told *Fox News*.<sup>98</sup> Given the ability to refuel at Sigonella using what’s called a “hot pit maneuver,” that allows the jets to land, refuel, and take off again without ever shutting off the engines, the entire trip from Aviano AB through refueling at NAS Sigonella and on to Benghazi could have been accomplished in no more than three hours. This would have been plenty of time to have prevented the mortar attack against the CIA Annex at 0500 in the morning of 12 September that claimed the lives of Tyrone Woods and Glenn Doherty.<sup>99</sup>

U.S. military forces need an affirmative order to go anywhere, though, and require specific cross-border authority to enter the sovereign air space or territory of another nation. Forces will spring to a readiness position, staged and ready to go, but cannot move without specific authority to do so. It would appear that on the night of 11-12 September 2012, no such orders were given. What is curious, however, is who (in the obvious absence of the commander-in-chief) had authority to deliver that order and who withheld it. Some indicators emerged in May 2014 testimony by retired Air Force Brigadier General Robert Lovell, who was the Deputy Director for Intelligence at AFRICOM the night of 11-12 September 2012. He testified 1 May 2014 before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Committee, telling them that AFRICOM did not respond to the Benghazi attack with military force because it was not clear that that was the response desired by the State Department. “It’s not what they did in that particular situation; it’s

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<sup>98</sup> Housley, Adam, “‘We could have been there’: Squadron member speaks out on stalled Benghazi response,” *Fox News*, May 12, 2016. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2016/05/12/could-have-been-there-squadron-member-speaks-out-on-stalled-benghazi-response.html?intcmp=hpbt3>

<sup>99</sup> *Passion for Liberty*

what they didn't do," he said "They didn't come forward with stronger requests for action." "Basically, there was a lot of looking to the State Department for what it was that they wanted... and the sense of deference to the desires of the State Department in terms of what they would like to have," he added.<sup>100</sup>

***The State Department?!*** BG Lovell's words should have grabbed all our attention: he was implying, without saying so in so many words, that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wielded cross-border authority the night of the Benghazi attack—and withheld it, meaning that no U.S. military forces could cross into Libyan territory to even attempt a rescue mission. Not because the host country (Libya in this case) refused country clearance (according to DCM Greg Hicks, the State Department simply never asked for it). Not because there wasn't time. Not because there weren't forces available. Just...because.

The only U.S. force to come to the aid of the beleaguered Americans under fire in Benghazi was a seven-man pick-up team of U.S. Special Forces and Marines who chartered a small Libyan commuter-style jet out of Tripoli to fly to Benghazi, plus a second unarmed drone in the sky.<sup>101</sup> The Tripoli rescue force arrived at Benghazi airport at 1:30 a.m. Libya time (7:30 p.m. Eastern time), but was held up with no transportation for hours in the airport by members of the Libya Shield militia. By 5 a.m. Libya time (11 p.m. Eastern time) the morning of 12 September, the rescue force, including Glen Doherty, finally arrived at the Annex. Doherty joined the defenders on the rooftop to fight. Then, at 5:15 a.m. Libya time (11:15 p.m. Eastern time), the enemy attacked with mortars, seriously injuring both DSS officer David Ubben and GRS team member Mark ("Oz") Geist, and killing Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods. The precision of that attack has long raised questions concerning how the jihadis were able to bracket and hit the compound so directly. GRS team members suspect that a local Libyan air conditioning repair crew that was at the Annex during the preceding week may have fixed its GPS coordinates.

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<sup>100</sup> Johnson, Andrew, "AFRICOM General: State Dept. Didn't Make Strong Enough Request in Benghazi," *National Review: The Corner*, May 1, 2014. <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/377043/africom-general-state-dept-didnt-make-strong-enough-request-benghazi-andrew-johnson>

<sup>101</sup> "EXCLUSIVE: Benghazi Heroes Debunk House Intel Report as 'Full of Inaccuracies' with Firsthand Account," *Breitbart News*, 2 December 2014. <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2014/12/02/cia-benghazi-heroes-debunk-house-intel-report-as-full-of-inaccuracies-with-firsthand-account-from-the-ground/>

Sometime during the early morning hours of 12 September 2012, a local Benghazi police officer (NFI) telephoned Libyan government forces (also NFI) and requested they come to the site of the CIA Annex. Annex defenders were still at their positions when about 50 pick-up trucks mounted with 23 mm. machine guns in their beds finally arrived around 5:30 a.m. Libya time. Those Libyan forces arrested two attackers whom they took away with them.

Although no one had known for hours what had happened to Ambassador Stevens, it now appears that his body was discovered at the SMC about 1 a.m. Libya time (7:00 p.m. Eastern time) by Libyan casuals and/or looters, who took him to the Benghazi Medical Center. There, Dr. Ziad Abu Zeid administered CPR and tried to revive him, but to no avail. At some point thereafter, Stevens' body was taken from the hospital to the Benghazi airport by parties unknown to the CCB.

As the evacuation began, the survivors, the most severely injured (Geist and Ubben) and the three recovered bodies (Doherty, Smith, and Woods) were driven to Benghazi airport. Geist and Ubben went on the first flight, traveling in the plane that had come from Tripoli earlier, (the small commuter or business-size jet) and they flew back to Tripoli. A C-130 Libyan government plane just happened to arrive at Benghazi airport as the evacuation was getting underway. This plane taxied to the far end of the airport upon landing, so it obviously had not been sent for the Americans. Group members chased it down and were able to use it to transport the rest of the survivors to Tripoli. It was not an American flight and had not been sent for the Americans in Benghazi; nevertheless, the rest of the survivors loaded onto that plane and flew back to Tripoli as well.

### **Files from Benghazi: In the Hands of Al Qa'eda?**

An intriguing episode occurred in the 24 hours after the battle of Benghazi ended. According to Tom Joscelyn, writing in *The Weekly Standard*, a Libyan jihadi named Faraj al-Chalabi (aka, al-Shibli), a probable LIFG member who once served as a bodyguard for Usama bin Laden, is suspected of having taken unspecified materials from one of the two compounds in Benghazi (whether the SMC or Annex is not clear) and couriered them to senior al-Qa'eda leadership in

Pakistan.<sup>102</sup> When he returned to Libya in early March 2014, he was detained<sup>103</sup> and questioned by the FBI. Within a couple of months, however, he was released, with no reason given and his exact role in the Benghazi attacks still not clear. In October 2015, he was killed; his body was found in Benghazi.<sup>104</sup>

The possibility that sensitive materials may have been taken from one of the U.S. mission sites in Benghazi takes on added layers of subterfuge in light of a November 2012 article in *The Wall Street Journal*, which reported that “the CIA appears to have dispatched local Libyan agents to the annex to destroy any sensitive documents and equipment there, even as the consulate compound remained unguarded and exposed to looters and curiosity seekers for weeks, officials said.”<sup>105</sup> The term “agents” is particular to the CIA, by which it means recruited foreign nationals who work for the Agency. So, the entire U.S. mission in Benghazi has just been assaulted, trashed, and abandoned under fire in large measure because Americans at every level either could not or did not distinguish friend from foe, jihadi from non-jihadi. Yet somehow there were still Libyans trusted to identify and destroy sensitive materials that may have been left behind? But who got there first? Faraj al-Chalabi or the “local Libyan agents?” No chance he might have been one of those, is there?

### **A Cover-Up That Revealed Everything**

The Obama-Clinton cover-up began before the Benghazi survivors and bodies of the fallen had cleared Libyan air space. By 6:07 p.m. Eastern Time that night, the State Department Ops Center had emailed the FBI, Pentagon and White House that the al-Qa’eda-linked Ansar al-Shariah had issued a claim of responsibility for the attack on online social media sites.

Shortly after that, and before any official statement was released, President Obama was on the phone between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Time with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

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<sup>102</sup> Joscelyn, Thomas, “Obama Administration's Benghazi Bombshell,” *The Weekly Standard*, Jan 07, 2014. <http://www.weeklystandard.com/obama-administrations-benghazi-bombshell/article/773986>

<sup>103</sup> Joscelyn, Thomas, “Benghazi suspect fled to Pakistan, recently detained in Libya,” *The Long War Journal*, March 14, 2013. [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/03/al\\_qaeda-linked\\_beng.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/03/al_qaeda-linked_beng.php)

<sup>104</sup> Karadsheh, Jomana, Holly Yan and Michael Pearson, “Where are the Benghazi suspects?” *CNN*, October 21, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/14/world/africa/libya-benghazi-suspect-dead/>

<sup>105</sup> Entous, Adam, Siobhan Gorman and Margaret Coker, “CIA Takes Heat for Role in Libya,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 1, 2012. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204712904578092853621061838>

about a political issue. Right around 8:00 p.m. Eastern time, Tripoli DCM (now Acting Chief of Mission) Greg Hicks spoke by phone with Secretary Clinton and her aides, telling them in no uncertain terms that it had been a terrorist attack and that the “Innocence of Muslims” YouTube video was a “non-event” in Libya (likely at least in part due to abysmal Internet connectivity there). A State Department ‘Call Sheet’ stamped with the 11 September 2012 date states clearly as well that “Armed extremists attacked U.S. Mission Benghazi on September 11, setting fire to the Principal Officer's Residence and killing at least one [of the] American mission staff, Information Management Officer Sean Smith, on TDY from The Hague...”<sup>106</sup>

Further, Secretary Clinton was personally in contact with foreign leaders, including Libyan General National Congress President Mohammed Yousef el-Magariaf and Egyptian Prime Minister Hesham Mohamed Qandil. At 6:49 p.m. Eastern time the night of 11 September, Clinton was on the telephone with Magariaf, discussing the attack and frankly discussing with him the Ansar al-Shariah claim of responsibility for it.<sup>107</sup>

Nevertheless, Secretary Clinton spoke with President Obama around 10 p.m. Eastern Time, and shortly thereafter (at 10:08 p.m.) issued a formal State Department statement that blamed the attack on the YouTube video. The statement read, in part: “Some have sought to justify this vicious behavior as a response to inflammatory material posted on the Internet.”<sup>108</sup> This State Department statement was coordinated with the White House. “Per Ben [Rhodes’] email below,<sup>109</sup> this should be the USG comment for the night,” national security spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan wrote that evening regarding Clinton’s statement. Ben Rhodes was the then-White House deputy strategic communications adviser and brother of CBS News President David Rhodes.

The cover-up in fact had begun even earlier, kicked off apparently while the battle was still raging in Benghazi, by a White House attempt to “reach out to U-tube to advise ramifications of

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<sup>106</sup> <http://www.judicialwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/JW-v-State-April-7-Benghazi-production-01511-pg-70-71.pdf>

<sup>107</sup> “The Secretary's Call with Libyan General National Congress President Mohammed Magariaf,” Call UP: 09/11 @ 1849, <http://www.judicialwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Defs-Document-Production-March-7-2016.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> “What They Said, Before and After the Attack in Libya,” *New York Times*, Updated September 12, 2012. [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/12/us/politics/libya-statements.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/12/us/politics/libya-statements.html?_r=0)

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.judicialwatch.org/document-archive/jw-v-state-14-1511-16-17/>

the posting of the Pastor Jon Video,” referring to a video by Oregon-based Pastor Jon Courson, entitled “God vs Allah.”<sup>110</sup> The administration had already (by 9:11 p.m. Eastern Time, 11 September/ 3:11 a.m. Benghazi Time, 12 September) decided to blame an online video for the attack, but hadn’t quite settled on which video. Again, there was no question that Secretary Clinton knew it was an Islamic terror attack: she’d emailed her daughter Chelsea at 9:12 p.m. Eastern Time to tell her that an “Al Qaeda-like group” was responsible.<sup>111</sup>

As the administration response to the Benghazi attack was taking shape, the one question never specifically asked by anyone seems to be about where Hillary Clinton, Leon Panetta, General David Petraeus and President Barack Obama actually were throughout the night of 11-12 September 2012. In 2014, former national security spokesman Tommy Vietor told Fox News’ Bret Baier that President Obama was not in the Situation Room that night, but somewhere else in the White House.<sup>112</sup> But aside from hints that emerge from various timelines and emails pried years after the fact from government databases, we still don’t know for sure where any of them, especially the President, were that night, or what they were doing.

The next morning, on 12 September, President Obama did appear and spoke in the White House Rose Garden about the Benghazi attack, saying “No acts of terror will ever shake the resolve of this great nation, alter that character, or eclipse the light of the values that we stand for.” Nevertheless, he refused to call the Benghazi attack forthrightly a terror attack, a pattern that would persist for weeks.<sup>113</sup> That same day, CBS’s Steve Kroft asked the president directly, “Mr. President, this morning you went out of your way to avoid the use of the word ‘terrorism’ in connection with the Libya attack. Do you believe that this was a terrorist attack?” And Obama

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<sup>110</sup> Kouri, Jim, “Hillary’s ‘defenders’ considered framing U.S. pastor for Benghazi attack,” *Conservative Base*, May 2, 2016. <http://conservativebase.com/hillarys-defenders-considered-framing-u-s-pastor-for-benghazi-attack/> See also the statement about this by Rep. Darrell E. Issa (R-CA), Chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee that was entered into the Congressional Record on May 21, 2014.

<https://www.congress.gov/crec/2014/05/21/CREC-2014-05-21-pt1-PgE797.pdf>

<sup>111</sup> Nicholas, Peter, “Hillary Clinton’s Email to Chelsea Stars in Benghazi Hearing,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 22, 2015. <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2015/10/22/hillary-clintons-email-to-chelsea-stars-in-benghazi-hearing/>

<sup>112</sup> “Fmr. NSC Spokesman Tommy Vietor: Obama Was Not In The Situation Room During Benghazi Attack,” *Real Clear Politics Video*, 05/01/2014.

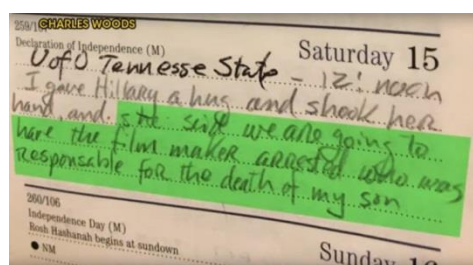
[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2014/05/01/fmr\\_nsc\\_spokesman\\_tommy\\_vietor\\_obama\\_was\\_not\\_in\\_the\\_situation\\_room\\_during\\_benghazi\\_attack.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2014/05/01/fmr_nsc_spokesman_tommy_vietor_obama_was_not_in_the_situation_room_during_benghazi_attack.html)

<sup>113</sup> “Remarks by the President on the Deaths of U.S. Embassy Staff in Libya,” 12 September 2012. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/09/12/remarks-president-deaths-us-embassy-staff-libya>

refused to answer the question directly, saying instead, “Well, it’s too early to know exactly how this came about, what group was involved, but obviously it was an attack on Americans.” CBS sat on this exchange, refusing to air it even after the infamous moment in the 16 October presidential debate between Obama and Governor Mitt Romney. At that time, moderator Candy Crowley interjected to wrongly say that Obama had called the Benghazi attack an act of terror on 12 September.<sup>114</sup>

Then, on the afternoon of 12 September 2012, Clinton spoke by telephone with Egyptian Prime Minister Qandil. According to the official State Department record of that call (obtained by Judicial Watch), Clinton clearly told him, “We know that the attack in Libya had nothing to do with the film. It was a planned attack—not a protest.” After PM Qandil replied back to her in a redacted segment, Clinton added, “Your [*sic*] not kidding. Based on the information we saw today we believe the group that claimed responsibility for this was affiliated with al Qaeda.”<sup>115</sup>

Despite knowing that the attack at Benghazi was a pre-planned Islamic terror attack by a group affiliated with al-Qa’eda, the Obama administration decided to lie about it and tell the American people that the attack was the result of a video. Statements over the following days from Jay Carney, the White House spokesman, and from Clinton herself continued to push the narrative that the attacks were because of the YouTube video. On 14 September, Clinton attended the transfer of remains ceremony for those killed in Benghazi at Andrews Air Force Base. According to handwritten notes that Charles Woods, father of Tyrone Woods, kept, Clinton told him, “We are going to have the filmmaker arrested who was responsible for the death of your son.”<sup>116</sup>



<sup>114</sup> “Attkisson: CBS Intentionally Held Obama Soundbite to Help Him Win Reelection,” *Breitbart*, 9 November 2014. <http://www.breitbart.com/video/2014/11/09/attkisson-cbs-intentionally-held-obama-sound-bite-to-help-him-win-reelection/>

<sup>115</sup> “The Secretary’s Call with Egyptian PM Kandil,” Call UP: 09/12 @ 1504, <http://www.judicialwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Defs-Document-Production-March-7-2016.pdf>

<sup>116</sup> “Hillary Lied—This is Huge,” *Political Insider*. <http://www.thepoliticalinsider.com/father-benghazi-victim-proof-hillary-lied-huge/> Woods also showed his notebook to members of the Citizens’ Commission on Benghazi.



And on 15 September, Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, the filmmaker who produced “Innocence of Muslims,” was duly arrested in California, accused of violating his probation, and ultimately sentenced to one year in jail on unrelated charges. This looks to many like a clear case of official U.S. government submission to the Islamic Law on slander.

### **The Talking Points**

It is not the intent of this CCB report to delve into all the details of the White House Talking Points deceit. The following account is a summary of the coordinated effort to lead the American people astray about the terrorist nature of the Benghazi attack and to reinforce President Obama’s duplicitous efforts to portray that attack as being “rooted in an Internet video, and not a failure of policy,” as Ben Rhodes’ smoking gun email put it.<sup>117</sup>

The sequence of events began when the House Intelligence Committee requested that the CIA put together a set of talking points about the attack. From the first drafts written entirely by the CIA, with extensive input from the State Department, to the final version, the talking points went through no fewer than twelve revisions. These talking points were distributed to Congress and to U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice before she appeared on five talk shows the Sunday after the Benghazi attack. Specifically, the edits seemed intended to remove any mention of Islamic terror or Ansar al-Shariah, the al-Qa’eda affiliate that was responsible for the attack. Rather, the final version of the talking points cast the attack as “spontaneously inspired.”<sup>118</sup> Former CIA Acting Director Michael Morell later testified that he removed the word “Islamic” from Islamic extremists in the talking points “because we were dealing with protests and demonstrations across much of the Muslim world as a result of the video and the last thing I wanted to do was to do anything to further inflame those passions...”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> “RE: PREP CALL with Susan, Saturday at 4:00 pm ET.”  
<http://www.judicialwatch.org/document-archive/rhodes-email/>

<sup>118</sup> Karl, Jonathan, “Exclusive: Benghazi Talking Points Underwent 12 Revisions, Scrubbed of Terror Reference,” *ABC News*, May 10, 2013. <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2013/05/exclusive-benghazi-talking-points-underwent-12-revisions-scrubbed-of-terror-references/>

<sup>119</sup> “CIA Chief: I Removed 'Islamic' from 'Islamic Extremists' in Benghazi Talking Points to Appease Muslims,” *Fox News*, April 3, 2013. <http://nation.foxnews.com/2014/04/03/cia-chief-i-removed-islamic-islamic-extremists-benghazi-talking-points-appease-muslims>

The aforementioned smoking gun email from Ben Rhodes, dated Friday September 14, 2012, discussed a 4:00 pm Eastern time Saturday 15 September prep call with then- UN ambassador Susan Rice, was acquired through the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) process and published by Judicial Watch on 18 April 2014. It is credited with finally spurring the House of Representatives to establish the long-sought Select Committee on Benghazi, chaired by South Carolina Congressman Trey Gowdy. In the email, Rhodes wrote that “the demonstrations in Benghazi were spontaneously inspired by the protests at the US Embassy in Cairo and evolved into a direct assault against the US Consulate and subsequently its annex.”<sup>120</sup> By September 16, Ambassador Rice was sent to face the cameras on the top Sunday shows and dutifully repeated the false White House YouTube video narrative.

The dam of lies didn’t begin to crack until 19 September 2012, when Matt Olsen, Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, appeared before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs. In response to a question from Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), who asked directly whether Olsen would say “that Ambassador Stevens and the other three Americans died as a result of a terrorist attack,” Olsen replied, “Certainly on that particular question I would say yes, they were killed in the course of a terrorist attack on our embassy [*sic*, diplomatic mission].”<sup>121</sup> Not surprisingly, sources told *Fox News* that Olsen was later reprimanded by the White House for his truthfulness.<sup>122</sup>

### **The White House Attack on Free Speech**

There was yet one last chapter in the White House election year playbook to distort what happened in Benghazi and deny the identity of the attackers as al-Qa’eda-linked Islamic terrorists. And that was an orchestrated campaign to align the White House’s Benghazi response with the OIC’s priority to criminalize criticism of Islam.

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<sup>120</sup> “Ben Rhodes Benghazi Email,” *Judicial Watch*, June 16, 2014. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/document-archive/rhodes-email/>

<sup>121</sup> Rogin, Josh, “Obama official: Benghazi was a terrorist attack,” *Foreign Policy*, September 19, 2012. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/19/obama-official-benghazi-was-a-terrorist-attack/>

<sup>122</sup> Herridge, Catherine, “Sources say counterterror chief reprimanded for calling Libya attack terror, White House denies,” *Fox News*, October 24, 2012. <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/10/24/sources-say-counterterror-chief-reprimanded-for-calling-libya-attack-terror.html>

Administration emails obtained by Judicial Watch show that the White House quickly sought to engage with both the domestic Muslim Brotherhood via Clinton's Deputy Chief of Staff, Huma Abedin and, via Rashad Hussain, the Obama administration's envoy with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in order to push the Internet video narrative. According to Judicial Watch, "[t]he day after the attack, Rashad Hussain, the Obama administration's special envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), sent an email to Ambassador Ufuk Gokcen, the OIC's ambassador to the United Nations, and Cenk Uraz, an official with the OIC, pushing the video as the cause of the Benghazi attack." The email has the subject line: "Urgent: Anti-Islamic Film and Violence" and reads in part:

*"I am sure you are considering putting a statement on the film and the related violence. In addition to the condemnation of the disgusting depictions, it will be important to emphasize the need to respond in a way that is consistent with Islamic principles, i.e. not engaging in violence and taking innocent life ..."*<sup>123</sup>

The OIC duly issued a statement linking the YouTube video, as requested by the Obama administration, to the Benghazi attack and suggested that the U.S. should restrict free speech in response, as per its own longtime efforts to criminalize criticism of Islam in accord with Islamic Law (shariah).<sup>124</sup>

The Muslim community both at home and abroad quickly got on board. A 17 September 2012 posting at the *American Muslim* website<sup>125</sup> by Tariq Ramadan (grandson of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood), was entitled "An Appeal to the Conscience of Muslims" and directly cited the YouTube video as the cause for non-existent demonstrations in Benghazi:

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<sup>123</sup> "Judicial Watch: Newly Released Documents Confirm White House Officials Set Hillary Clinton's Benghazi Response," June 29, 2015. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/press-releases/judicial-watch-newly-released-documents-confirm-white-house-officials-set-hillary-clintons-benghazi-response/>

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>125</sup> Ramadan, Tariq, "An Appeal to the Conscience of Muslims," *The American Muslim*, September 17, 2012. <http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/an-appeal-to-the-conscience-of-muslims>

*“...a short, crudely executed—and scrupulously insulting—film has inflamed deep-seated resentment. Several hundreds of furious demonstrators gathered in front of the American Embassy in Cairo and the US Consulate in Benghazi, Libya. In the confusion and violence, a US Ambassador and three diplomats were killed.”*<sup>126</sup>

Ramadan tossed off the obligatory condemnation of such violence with the following:

*“The violence must be condemned unconditionally. To attack innocents, diplomats and to kill indiscriminately is anti-Islamic by its very nature. Muslims cannot respond to insults to their religion in this way. On this principle, there can be no compromise.”*<sup>127</sup>

before returning to the actual point of the exercise, which is to restrict any speech deemed “offensive” by Muslims:

*“But behind the celebration of freedom of speech hides the arrogance of ideologists and well-fed racists who feed off the multiform humiliation of Muslims and to demonstrate the clear ‘superiority’ of their civilisation or the validity of their resistance to the ‘cancer’” of retrograde Islam. In criticising this ideological stance there can be no compromise either.”*<sup>128</sup>

By 20 September, there was a whole collection of statements by Muslims around the world, ostensibly condemning the attacks on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, but uniformly taking the opportunity to decry the video and call for suppression of free speech.

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) took a swipe at the “online video being circulated by anti-Muslim hate groups that depicts the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a very

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<sup>126</sup> Ramadan

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*

profane manner.”<sup>129</sup> ISNA is the largest Muslim Brotherhood front group in the U.S., and was named by the Justice Department an unindicted co-conspirator in the 2008 Holy Land Foundation HAMAS terror funding trial.

The Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), likewise a Muslim Brotherhood front group, condemned the attacks on U.S. missions in both Cairo and Benghazi—and then added: “The attacks come after a low-budget movie on YouTube called ‘Muhammad’ incited anger by depicting Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a demeaning and degrading manner.”<sup>130</sup>

Not to be outdone, the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR, the HAMAS front in the U.S.) published a statement asking Mideast Muslims to ignore “Trashy Anti-Islam Film” and urging “that this ignorant attempt to provoke the religious feelings of Muslims in the Arabic-speaking world be ignored and that its extremist producers not be given the cheap publicity they so desperately seek.”<sup>131</sup>

Next in line, the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), another Muslim Brotherhood front group, appealed for calm and added: “We also appeal to the larger American public to be wary of such attempts by individuals and groups, who in most cases have foreign ties, engaging in such hateful projects that not only endanger American and others’ lives overseas, but also incite hate attacks against minorities in America as well.”<sup>132</sup>

On 17 Sep 12, Ahmed Rehab, the Executive Director of CAIR-Chicago, spoke on local radio show “about the violence and anti-American protests that had resulted from an amateur anti-Muslim film.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> “Muslim, Arab, & Interfaith Organizations Condemn Attacks on U.S. Embassies—updated 9/20,” *The American Muslim*, 20 September 2012. <http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/muslims-and-muslim-organizations-condemn-attacks-on-u.s.-embassies>

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>133</sup> “Chicago Public Radio: Ahmed Rehab talks about Muslim film protest violence,” September 17, 2012. <http://www.ahmedrehab.com/2012/09/wbez-worldview-ahmed-rehab-talks-about-muslim-film-protest-violence/#more-3189>

## **Orchestrated Assault on Free Speech at the UN**

The grand finale of the White House’s campaign to capitalize on the Benghazi attack by aligning its anti-free speech narrative with the Muslim Brotherhood, OIC, and the GJM in general, unfolded at the annual United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that gathered in New York City on 25 September 2012. There, in an obviously choreographed performance, head of state after head of state from across the Muslim world took to the podium to condemn the YouTube film and call for restrictions on free speech in accordance with the Islamic Law on slander. What is never mentioned by any of them is that the “Innocence of Muslims” trailer contains vignettes—crudely portrayed to be sure—but taken directly from the Sunna (hadiths and *Sira*), or the recorded life of Muhammad.

Pakistani President Ali Zardari spoke on 25 September, telling the assembly that “...the International community must not become silent observers and should criminalize such acts that destroy the peace of the world and endanger world security by misusing freedom of expression.”<sup>134</sup>

Egypt’s newly-installed President Mohamed Morsi not only explicitly rejected free speech, but implied that speech causes violence, and emphasized what he called the “responsibility” of the UN to oppose “Islamophobia.” “Egypt respects freedom of expression,” he said, but “one that is not used to incite hatred against anyone. One that is not directed toward one specific religion...” Referring directly then to the YouTube video, he said “The obscenities that I have referred to that were recently released as part of an organized campaign against Islamic sanctities are unacceptable... We reject this. We cannot accept it.” Morsi said, his voice thin with anger, “We will not allow anyone to do this by word or deed.”<sup>135</sup>

The OIC renewed its own efforts to criminalize criticism of Islam, urging UN member states “to introduce into domestic criminal law a provision ensuring that those responsible for crimes with

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<sup>134</sup> “Transcript of President Zardari’s Speech before UN General Assembly,” September 25, 2012. <http://new-pakistan.com/2012/09/26/transcript-of-president-zardaris-speech-before-un-general-assembly/>

<sup>135</sup> “Egypt’s Mohamed Morsi UN General Assembly Speech Transcript 2012; First Democratically-Chosen Leader Since Mubarak’s Reign Ended (VIDEO),” September 26, 2012. <http://www.latinospot.com/articles/4611/20120926/egypts-mohammed-morsi-un-general-assembly-speech-mubarak-united-nations-transcript.htm>

racist or xenophobic motivation be prosecuted.” The text of the OIC statement deplored “the targeting of religious symbols and venerated persons” (code language for Islam and Muhammad).<sup>136</sup> OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu was even more direct in a 29 September 2012 interview with the *Associated Press*, in which he issued what can only be described as thinly-veiled threats, saying “If the Western world fails to understand the sensitivity of the Muslim world, then we are in trouble...Such provocations pose ‘a threat to international peace and security and the sanctity of life.’”<sup>137</sup>

Most disturbing of all was the speech by President Barack Obama, delivered before the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2012. Obama cited the YouTube film multiple times and issued a starkly-worded explicit bow to the Islamic Law on slander, saying, “The future must not belong to those who slander the prophet of Islam.”<sup>138</sup>

### **In Conclusion: Why CCB?**

All who take the oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic” accept the solemn duty and professional responsibility to know who the enemy is and to confront and defeat that enemy. The failure of senior officials of the U.S. government, especially within the top ranks of national security, forthrightly to name—or make any serious attempt to defend against or take the fight to—the Islamic terrorist enemy who attacked our mission in Benghazi, murdered four Americans and grievously injured others, is nothing less than dereliction of duty and a betrayal of that oath. That enemy includes all who support the Global Jihad Movement. Those forces remain on the attack against the United States, our allies, and the entire free world and will not stop until decisively defeated. That defeat can only be delivered by free people, committed to the eternal vigilance that Thomas Jefferson reminded us is the price of liberty.

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<sup>136</sup> “Cultural & social affairs Department OIC islamophobia Observatory Monthly Bulletin–September 2012. [http://www.oic-oci.org/uploads/file/Islamphobia/2012/en/9MB\\_Sept-12.pdf](http://www.oic-oci.org/uploads/file/Islamphobia/2012/en/9MB_Sept-12.pdf)

<sup>137</sup> Hadid, Diaa, “Islamic group calls for global ban on offending prophet,” *The Times of Israel*,” September 29, 2012. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/islamic-group-calls-for-global-ban-on-offending-prophet/>

<sup>138</sup> “Remarks by the President to the UN General Assembly,” September 25, 2012. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/09/25/remarks-president-un-general-assembly>

The Citizens' Commission on Benghazi formed in 2013 with the rueful conclusion that the Obama administration, Congressional Committees and even the Select Committee on Benghazi would never tell the full story of the 11 September 2012 Benghazi attack to the American people. We owe it to the fallen, the injured, their families and the American people to explain what happened and why. This must be done not just with another timeline narration, but with a full explanation of how our leadership failed in its duty to name and confront the Islamic jihadist enemy, failed to take the steps necessary to protect our diplomatic mission in Benghazi, failed to so much as attempt to come to the rescue of those beleaguered Americans that night, and failed to tell the truth about what happened afterward. American citizens deserve to know what happened that night, before, afterward, and why so that they might hold accountable those responsible for nothing less than a catastrophic betrayal of fundamental American principles.

We hope this report will contribute to that mission.      ##



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## Members of the Citizens' Commission on Benghazi



**Roger Aronoff** is the Editor of Accuracy in Media. He has also appeared as a guest commentator on National Public Radio, Air America, CNN, Fox News, CNBC's "Kudlow & Company," Court TV, Russia Today, and CTV (Canadian TV), among others.



**Capt. Larry Bailey, (SEAL), USN (Ret.)** spent almost 27 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL with duty stations in the Philippines, Panama, Bolivia, and Scotland. He is also co-chairman of Special Operations Speaks.



**Lieutenant Colonel Ken Benway** served twenty-seven years on active duty as both a non-commissioned officer and commissioned officer. He served in leadership positions in the U.S., Vietnam, Germany and Italy while assigned to U.S. Army Special Forces and Parachute Infantry Units. Ken is a co-founder of Special Operations Speaks.



**Colonel Richard F. ("Dick") Brauer Jr. USAF, (Ret.)**, a rated officer with 5,200 hours of worldwide operational flying, is a Co-Founder of the Special Operations Speaks (SOS) PAC. He served in Air Force and Joint Special Operations units from Squadron/Wing positions to the Joint Staff and served as initial cadre in both the Joint Special Operations Agency (JSOA) and the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).



**Ed Butowsky**, managing partner of Chapwood Investments, LLC, is an internationally recognized expert in the investment wealth management and personal finance industry. Butowsky became intimately involved in various aspects of the Benghazi story, including the publishing of the book, *13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened In Benghazi*, and ultimately the movie version as well.



**Lt. Col. Dennis B. Haney, USAF (Ret.)** is a program manager, a U.S. Air Force jet fighter aircraft operations director, flight test director, and combat-experienced Electronic Warfare Officer with 22 years of experience as an Electronic Combat technical expert. After retiring, he joined Special Operations Speaks (SOS) as the Operations Coordinator.



**B/Gen. Charles Jones, USAF (Ret.)** served continuously in the Air Force and Air Force Reserve from 1954 to 1986. He flew his entire career, logging 6,500 hours in 15 types of U.S. Air Force aircraft. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and 13 other Decorations.



**Clare Lopez** is Vice President for Research & Analysis at the Center for Security Policy in Washington, D.C. Lopez was a career operations officer with the CIA and served on Sen. Ted Cruz's national security team during his 2016 presidential campaign.



**Admiral James “Ace” Lyons (Ret.)** is a former four-star admiral, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and the Father of the Navy Seal Red Cell Program. He has eight commands including the U.S. Second Fleet, NATO Striking Fleet, as well as Seventh Fleet Logistic Force plus several ship commands.



**Lt. General Thomas McInerney (Ret.)** retired after 35 years of active duty as a fighter pilot, and Commander at every level from squadron to Major Air Command. He has been a Fox News Military Analyst for almost 15 years and he does numerous radio shows as a guest on National Security matters.



**Retired USMC Colonel Wayne Morris** is President at WAYMOR, Inc. He has more than 34 years of service in the United States Marine Corps. He was the Human Resources Director of Onslow County, North Carolina Local Government from 1997 to 2005 and was a Senior Operations Advisor to the Afghan National Army 2006 to 2007.



**Kevin Shipp**, a former CIA Officer and Antiterrorism expert, held several high level positions in the CIA. He is the recipient of two CIA Meritorious Unit Citations, three Exceptional Performance Awards and a Medallion for overseas operations. He is the author of *From the Company of Shadows: CIA Operations and the War on Terrorism*.



**Retired General Paul Vallely** served in the Vietnam War and retired in 1993 as Deputy Commanding General, Pacific Command. In 2004, together with retired Air Force Lieutenant General Thomas McInerney, he co-authored the book *Endgame: The Blueprint for Victory in the War on Terror*. He is the Chairman of Stand Up America and Nemo Arms Company.



**Former Congressman and Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Allen West** is currently President and CEO of the National Center for Policy Analysis. He is a current contributor for Fox News and P.J. Media. Before taking office, he was an adviser to the Afghan National Army. In 2011, West took office as the first black Republican Congressman from Florida since Josiah T. Walls left office in 1876.



*Ambassador Chris  
Stevens*

*Sean Smith  
U.S. Air Force*

*Glen Doherty  
U.S. Navy SEAL*

*Tyrone Woods  
U.S. Navy SEAL*

*In Memoriam*



**ACCURACY IN MEDIA, INC.**

**Accuracy In Media  
4350 East West Highway  
Suite 555  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
Phone: (800) 787-4567  
Fax: (202) 364-4098  
E-mail: [info@aim.org](mailto:info@aim.org)  
[www.aim.org](http://www.aim.org)**

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