



Benghazi Attack Investigations

A cover-up by the Left, the
Right's red herring, or...?

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The A-Mark Foundation
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I. Executive Summary.....	3
II. Background on Benghazi Attacks.....	4
III. Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State	6
IV. Secretary of State Job Description.....	6
V. Government Reports on Benghazi.....	8
1. US State Department (Nonpartisan) – 12/19/2012	8
2. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (Bipartisan) – 12/30/2012.....	11
3. Five House Committee Chairs (Republican) – 4/23/2013	12
4. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Republican) – 9/16/2013	14
5. Democratic House Oversight Committee Staff (Democratic) – 9/19/2013... 	15
6. US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (Bipartisan) – 1/15/2014.....	16
7. House Committee on Foreign Affairs (Republican) – 2/7/2014	18
8. House Committee on Armed Services (Republican) – 2/10/2014	20
9. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (Bipartisan) – 11/21/2014.....	21
10. House Select Committee on Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi (Republican) – 12/7/2016.....	22
VI. No Conclusion	23

I. Executive Summary

- **Hillary Clinton served as Secretary of State under President Obama from 2009-2013.**

Hillary Clinton, former First Lady, served as the 67th Secretary of State under President Barack Obama from January 21, 2009, to February 1, 2013. The secretary of state is a cabinet position appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate and serves as the president's chief foreign affairs adviser.

- **On September 11, 2012, the US diplomatic compound in Benghazi was attacked and four Americans died.**

On September 11-12, 2012, attacks on the US diplomatic compound and a nearby CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya, killed four Americans, including US Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. The motivations behind the attacks were unclear, leading to a slate of investigations. The secretary of state, as head of the State Department, was called to account for the security failures.

- **The State Department published a nonpartisan Accountability Review Board Report three months after the attack.**

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton convened an investigation into the security failures and several congressional committees conducted investigations into what happened in the attacks, leading to a total of ten government reports published between 2012 and 2016:

- **Congressional committees published eight reports: two bipartisan, one by Democrats, and five by Republicans.**
- **Clinton testified for nearly 11 hours before the House Select Committee on Benghazi.**

1. **US State Department:** "Accountability Review Board Report" (Nonpartisan) – 12/19/2012
2. **Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs:** "Flashing Red: A Special Report On The Terrorist Attack At Benghazi" (Bipartisan) – 12/30/2012
3. **Five House Committee Chairs:** "Interim Progress Report for the Members of the House Republican Conference on the Events Surrounding the September 11, 2012 Terrorist Attacks in Benghazi, Libya" (Republican) – 4/23/2013
4. **House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform:** "Benghazi Attacks: Investigative Update Interim Report" (Republican) – 9/16/2013
5. **Democratic House Oversight Committee Staff:** "Status Update on Investigations of Attacks on U.S. Personnel and Facilities in Benghazi" (Democratic) – 9/19/2013

6. **US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence:** “Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012 Together With Additional Views” (Bipartisan) – 1/15/2014
7. **House Committee on Foreign Affairs:** “Benghazi: Where is the State Department Accountability?” (Republican) – 2/7/2014
8. **House Committee on Armed Services:** “Majority Interim Report: Benghazi Investigation Update” (Republican) – 2/10/2014
9. **House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:** “Investigative Report on the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012” (Bipartisan) – 11/21/2014
10. **House Select Committee on Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi:** “Final Report of the Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi” (Republican) – 12/7/2016

The House Select Committee on Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi spent about \$6.8 million on its investigation (\$4.5 million by Republicans and \$2.3 million by Democrats), and the State Department estimated that it spent \$14 million responding to congressional investigations by turning over documents and making staff available for interviews and hearings. We did not find cost estimates for the other congressional investigations.

Given the high level of emotions and finger pointing regarding the Benghazi attacks, we decided that any attempt to interpret or categorize the reports might compromise our primary goal of nonpartisanship. Therefore, we offer no conclusion or even commentary on any parts of the reports, but we have endeavored to present them accurately.

We hope the information in this report helps you see the perspectives of how different political bodies reported on what happened in Benghazi on Sept. 11 and 12, 2012, and in the aftermath.

II. Background on Benghazi Attacks

Four Americans were killed in attacks on the US diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, and at a nearby CIA annex, on September 11-12, 2012: Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, Sean

Smith, Glen Doherty, and Tyrone Woods.¹ The State Department said that four people were wounded, and CNN reported that seven CIA officers may have been wounded as well.^{2, 3}

The attack marked the first violent death of a U.S. ambassador since 1988.⁴

In the aftermath, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton convened an investigation, and there were seven separate congressional committees devoted to determining the events of that night.

According to Politifact.com:⁵

“It should be noted that each congressional committee that investigated the Benghazi attack looked into different aspects of the event. After the attack, Republican Speaker John Boehner directed the House Committees on Oversight and Government Reform, Judiciary, Foreign Affairs, Armed Services and Intelligence to investigate the issues within their jurisdictions. The House investigations were led by Republicans. Two bipartisan Senate Committees also investigated the attack.”

The motivations behind the attacks remain unclear. Initially, an anti-Islam video posted on YouTube was blamed for inciting spontaneous protests. The Obama administration later called the attacks an act of terror perpetrated by extremist groups.⁶ Some Republicans in Congress theorized that the attack was planned by Al Qaeda to coincide with the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks.⁷

In the course of congressional investigations into the attacks, Clinton was called to testify publicly. Her testimony for the House Select Committee on Benghazi lasted nearly 11 hours. Democrats asserted that her political enemies were trying to hurt her chances in the presidential election, while Republicans blamed Clinton and the Obama administration for the 2012 attacks.⁸

¹ Select Committee on Benghazi Minority Site, “Benghazi on the Record: Asked and Answered,” askedandanswered-democrats.benghazi.house.gov (accessed February 18, 2017)

² Julian Pecuet, “State: Only four people wounded at Benghazi,” thehill.com, March 15, 2013

³ CNN, “Exclusive: Dozens of CIA operatives on the ground during Benghazi attack,” thelead.blogs.cnn.com, August 1, 2013

⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “2012 Benghazi attacks,” britannica.com, September 4, 2021

⁵ Politifact, “Clinton: 7 Benghazi probes so far,” politifact.com, Oct. 12, 2015

⁶ Janell Ross, “The Benghazi controversy, explained by 7 numbers,” washingtonpost.com, October 22, 2015

⁷ David D. Kirkpatrick, “A Deadly Mix in Benghazi,” nytimes.com, December 28, 2013

⁸ Evan Halper and David Lauter, “Benghazi hearing ends after extraordinary 11-hour grilling of Clinton,” latimes.com, October 22, 2015

III. Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State

Hillary Clinton, former First Lady, served as the 67th Secretary of State under President Barack Obama from January 21, 2009, to February 1, 2013.⁹ Clinton was sworn in following a Senate vote of 94-2.¹⁰

Clinton was officially sworn in on January 21, 2009 in a private ceremony, then ceremonially sworn in by then-Vice President Joe Biden with an oath aired on C-SPAN on February 2, 2009:¹¹

“I, Hillary Rodham Clinton, do solemnly swear, that I will support and defend, the Constitution of the United States, against all enemies foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith, and allegiance to the same, that I take this oath freely, without any mental reservation, or purpose of evasion, that I will well and faithfully, discharge the duties of the office, on which I am about to enter, so help me God.”

Prior to taking office, Clinton read from a prepared statement at the hearing of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on January 13, 2009:¹²

“I am deeply grateful for the trust—and keenly aware of the responsibility—that the President-elect has placed in me to serve our country and our people at a time of such grave dangers, and great possibilities. If confirmed, I will accept the duties of the office with gratitude, humility, and firm determination to represent the United States as energetically and faithfully as I can.”

IV. Secretary of State Job Description

The “Duties of the Secretary of State” are listed on State.gov as follows:¹³

“Under the Constitution, the President of the United States determines U.S. foreign policy. The Secretary of State, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, is the President’s chief foreign affairs adviser. The Secretary carries out the President’s foreign policies through the State Department and the Foreign Service of the United States.

Created in 1789 by the Congress as the successor to the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of State is the senior executive Department of the U.S. Government.

⁹ History.state.gov, “Biographies of the Secretaries of State: Hillary Rodham Clinton (1947–),” Office of the Historian (accessed February 15, 2017)

¹⁰ CNN, “Hillary Clinton sworn in as secretary of state,” edition.cnn.com, January 22, 2009

¹¹ Hillary Clinton, “Secretary of State Ceremonial Swearing-In,” c-span.org, February 2, 2009

¹² Hillary Clinton, “Nomination of Hillary R. Clinton to Be Secretary of State, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate,” govinfo.gov, January 13, 2009

¹³ US Department of State, “Duties of the Secretary of State,” state.gov (accessed November 23, 2021)

The Secretary of State's duties relating to foreign affairs have not changed significantly since then, but they have become far more complex as international commitments multiplied. These duties — the activities and responsibilities of the State Department — include the following:

- Serves as the President's principal adviser on U.S. foreign policy;
- Conducts negotiations relating to U.S. foreign affairs;
- Grants and issues passports to American citizens and exequaturs to foreign consuls in the United States;
- Advises the President on the appointment of U.S. ambassadors, ministers, consuls, and other diplomatic representatives;
- Advises the President regarding the acceptance, recall, and dismissal of the representatives of foreign governments;
- Personally participates in or directs U.S. representatives to international conferences, organizations, and agencies;
- Negotiates, interprets, and terminates treaties and agreements;
- Ensures the protection of the U.S. Government to American citizens, property, and interests in foreign countries;
- Supervises the administration of U.S. immigration laws abroad;
- Provides information to American citizens regarding the political, economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian conditions in foreign countries;
- Informs the Congress and American citizens on the conduct of U.S. foreign relations;
- Promotes beneficial economic intercourse between the United States and other countries;
- Administers the Department of State;
- Supervises the Foreign Service of the United States.

In addition, the Secretary of State retains domestic responsibilities that Congress entrusted to the State Department in 1789. These include the custody of the Great Seal of the United States, the preparation of certain presidential proclamations, the publication of treaties and international acts as well as the official record of the foreign relations of the United States, and the custody of certain original treaties and international agreements. The Secretary also serves as the channel of communication

between the Federal Government and the States on the extradition of fugitives to or from foreign countries.”

V. Government Reports on Benghazi

The House Select Committee on Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi spent about \$6.77 million on its investigation (\$4.5 million by Republicans and \$2.3 million by Democrats), and the State Department estimated that it spent \$14 million responding to congressional investigations by turning over documents and making staff available for interviews and hearings.^{14, 15} We did not find cost estimates for the other congressional investigations.

1. US State Department (Nonpartisan) – 12/19/2012

Title of Report: “[Accountability Review Board Report](#)”

Date of Report: December 19, 2012

Type of Committee: Nonpartisan; convened by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

Pages: 39

Chair: Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering

Members: Four Board members were selected by the secretary of state and one member from the intelligence community (IC) was selected by the director for national intelligence. Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering served as Chair, with Admiral Michael Mullen as Vice Chair. Additional members were Catherine Bertini, Richard Shinnick, and Hugh Turner, who represented the IC.

Conclusion From the Report:

“In examining the circumstances of these attacks, the Accountability Review Board for Benghazi determined that:

1. The attacks were security related, involving arson, small arms and machine gun fire, and the use of RPGs, grenades, and mortars against U.S. personnel at two separate

¹⁴ Glenn Kessler, “Have Republicans really spent \$7 million on the Benghazi Committee?,” [washingtonpost.com](#), May 16, 2016

¹⁵ Select Committee on Benghazi, Democrats, “On Three-Year Anniversary of First Republican Benghazi Hearing, State Dept. Reports Spending \$14 Million—and Counting,” [democrats-benghazi.house.gov](#) (via [archive.org](#)), October 10, 2015

facilities – the SMC and the Annex – and en route between them. Responsibility for the tragic loss of life, injuries, and damage to U.S. facilities and property rests solely and completely with the terrorists who perpetrated the attacks. The Board concluded that there was no protest prior to the attacks, which were unanticipated in their scale and intensity.

2. Systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two bureaus of the State Department (the ‘Department’) resulted in a Special Mission security posture that was inadequate for Benghazi and grossly inadequate to deal with the attack that took place.

Security in Benghazi was not recognized and implemented as a ‘shared responsibility’ by the bureaus in Washington charged with supporting the post, resulting in stove-piped discussions and decisions on policy and security. That said, Embassy Tripoli did not demonstrate strong and sustained advocacy with Washington for increased security for Special Mission Benghazi.

The short-term, transitory nature of Special Mission Benghazi’s staffing, with talented and committed, but relatively inexperienced, American personnel often on temporary assignments of 40 days or less, resulted in diminished institutional knowledge, continuity, and mission capacity.

Overall, the number of Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) security staff in Benghazi on the day of the attack and in the months and weeks leading up to it was inadequate, despite repeated requests from Special Mission Benghazi and Embassy Tripoli for additional staffing. Board members found a pervasive realization among personnel who served in Benghazi that the Special Mission was not a high priority for Washington when it came to security-related requests, especially those relating to staffing...

In the weeks and months leading up to the attacks, the response from post, Embassy Tripoli, and Washington to a deteriorating security situation was inadequate. At the same time, the SMC’s dependence on the armed but poorly skilled Libyan February 17 Martyrs’ Brigade (February 17) militia members and unarmed, locally contracted Blue Mountain Libya (BML) guards for security support was misplaced.

Although the February 17 militia had proven effective in responding to improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on the Special Mission in April and June 2012, there were some troubling indicators of its reliability in the months and weeks preceding the September attacks. At the time of Ambassador Stevens’ visit, February 17 militia members had stopped accompanying Special Mission vehicle movements in protest over salary and working hours.

Post and the Department were well aware of the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks but at no time were there ever any specific, credible threats

against the mission in Benghazi related to the September 11 anniversary. Ambassador Stevens and Benghazi-based DS agents had taken the anniversary into account and decided to hold all meetings on-compound on September 11.

The Board found that Ambassador Stevens made the decision to travel to Benghazi independently of Washington, per standard practice. Timing for his trip was driven in part by commitments in Tripoli, as well as a staffing gap between principal officers in Benghazi. Plans for the Ambassador's trip provided for minimal close protection security support and were not shared thoroughly with the Embassy's country team, who were not fully aware of planned movements off compound. The Ambassador did not see a direct threat of an attack of this nature and scale on the U.S. Mission in the overall negative trendline of security incidents from spring to summer 2012. His status as the leading U.S. government advocate on Libya policy, and his expertise on Benghazi in particular, caused Washington to give unusual deference to his judgments.

Communication, cooperation, and coordination among Washington, Tripoli, and Benghazi functioned collegially at the working-level but were constrained by a lack of transparency, responsiveness, and leadership at the senior levels. Among various Department bureaus and personnel in the field, there appeared to be very real confusion over who, ultimately, was responsible and empowered to make decisions based on both policy and security considerations.

3. Notwithstanding the proper implementation of security systems and procedures and remarkable heroism shown by American personnel, those systems and the Libyan response fell short in the face of a series of attacks that began with the sudden penetration of the Special Mission compound by dozens of armed attackers.

The Board found the responses by both the BML guards and February 17 to be inadequate. The Board's inquiry found little evidence that the armed February 17 guards offered any meaningful defense of the SMC, or succeeded in summoning a February 17 militia presence to assist expeditiously.

The Board found the Libyan government's response to be profoundly lacking on the night of the attacks, reflecting both weak capacity and near absence of central government influence and control in Benghazi. The Libyan government did facilitate assistance from a quasi-governmental militia that supported the evacuation of U.S. government personnel to Benghazi airport. The Libyan government also provided a military C-130 aircraft which was used to evacuate remaining U.S. personnel and the bodies of the deceased from Benghazi to Tripoli on September 12.

The Board determined that U.S. personnel on the ground in Benghazi performed with courage and readiness to risk their lives to protect their colleagues, in a near impossible situation. The Board members believe every possible effort was made to rescue and recover Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith.

The interagency response was timely and appropriate, but there simply was not enough time for armed U.S. military assets to have made a difference.

4. The Board found that intelligence provided no immediate, specific tactical warning of the September 11 attacks. Known gaps existed in the intelligence community's understanding of extremist militias in Libya and the potential threat they posed to U.S. interests, although some threats were known to exist.

5. The Board found that certain senior State Department officials within two bureaus demonstrated a lack of proactive leadership and management ability in their responses to security concerns posed by Special Mission Benghazi, given the deteriorating threat environment and the lack of reliable host government protection. However, the Board did not find reasonable cause to determine that any individual U.S. government employee breached his or her duty."

2. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (Bipartisan) – 12/30/2012

Report Title: "[Flashing Red: A Special Report On The Terrorist Attack At Benghazi](#)"

Description: "In the report that follows we provide a brief factual overview of the attacks in Benghazi and then discuss our findings and recommendations."

Date of Report: December 30, 2012

Type of Committee: Bipartisan

Pages: 29

Chair: Senator Joseph I. Lieberman (Independent-CT)

Members: Senator Susan M. Collins (R-ME), Ranking Republican Member

Conclusion From the Report:

"The deaths of Ambassador Stevens and three other Americans at the hands of terrorists is a tragic reminder that the fight our country is engaged in with Islamist extremists and terrorists is not over. U.S. and Western diplomats, and other personnel operating in the Middle East and other countries where these terrorists use violence to further their extremist agenda and thwart democratic reforms are increasingly at risk.

We hope this report will help contribute to the ongoing discussion that our nation must have about how best to protect the brave men and women who serve our

country abroad and how to win this war that will continue for years to come. We owe it to our public servants abroad to protect them as they work to protect us. The government of the U.S. failed tragically to fulfill that responsibility in Benghazi on September 11, 2012. We hope the findings and recommendations we have made in this Special Report will help ensure that such a failure never happens again.”

3. Five House Committee Chairs (Republican) – 4/23/2013

Report Title: “[Interim Progress Report for the Members of the House Republican Conference on the Events Surrounding the September 11, 2012 Terrorist Attacks in Benghazi, Libya](#)”

Description: “An ongoing Congressional investigation across five House Committees concerning the events surrounding the September 11, 2012, terrorist attacks on U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya has made several determinations to date, ... These preliminary findings illustrate the need for continued examination and oversight by the five House Committees.”

Date of Report: April 23, 2013

Type of Committee: Heads of five Republican-led House committees, Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, Judiciary, Oversight & Government Reform, and Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

Pages: 43

Chairs: Representatives Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (R-CA), Committee on Armed Services; Ed Royce (R-CA), Committee on Foreign Affairs; Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), Committee on the Judiciary; Darrell Issa (R-CA), Committee on Oversight & Government Reform; and Mike Rogers (R-AL), Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

Conclusion From the Report:

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

Before the Attacks:

- After the U.S.-backed Libyan revolution ended the Gadhafi regime, the U.S. government did not deploy sufficient U.S. security elements to protect U.S. interests and personnel that remained on the ground.

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

During the Attacks:

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

After the Attacks:

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

- Administration officials crafted and continued to rely on incomplete and misleading talking points. Specifically, after a White House Deputies Meeting on Saturday, September 15, 2012, the Administration altered the talking points to remove references to the likely participation of Islamic extremists in the attacks. The Administration also removed references to the threat of extremists linked to al-Qa'ida in Benghazi and eastern Libya, including information about at least five other attacks against foreign interests in Benghazi. Senior State Department officials requested – and the White House approved – that the details of the threats, specifics of the previous attacks, and previous warnings be removed to insulate the Department from criticism that it ignored the threat environment in Benghazi.
- Evidence rebuts Administration claims that the talking points were modified to protect classified information or to protect an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Email exchanges during the interagency process do not reveal any concern with protecting classified information. Additionally, the Bureau itself approved a version of the talking points with significantly more information about the attacks and previous threats than the version that the State Department requested. Thus, the claim that the State Department's edits were made solely to protect that investigation is not credible.
- The Administration deflected responsibility by blaming the IC for the information it communicated to the public in both the talking points and the subsequent narrative it perpetuated. Had Administration spokesmen performed even limited due diligence inquiries into the intelligence behind the talking points or requested reports from personnel on the ground, they would have quickly understood that the situation was more complex than the narrative provided by Ambassador Susan Rice and others in the Administration."

4. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Republican) – 9/16/2013

Report Title: "[Benghazi Attacks: Investigative Update Interim Report on the Accountability Review Board](#)"

Description: "This interim report focuses exclusively on the ARB and its shortcomings. While the Committee presents current observations about the ARB gleaned through its investigation, it has also identified areas for further inquiry. Indeed, many serious questions surrounding Benghazi have gone unanswered. The Committee will continue its investigation wherever the facts lead."

Date of Report: September 16, 2013

Type of Committee: Republican-led

Pages: 98

Chair: Representative Darrell Issa (R-CA)

Members: From the Department of State, Eric Boswell, Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security; Scott Bultrowicz, Director, Diplomatic Security Service; Elizabeth Dibble, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; Jeffrey Feltman, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; Gregory Hicks, Deputy Chief of Mission, Libya; Elizabeth Jones, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; Patrick F. Kennedy, Under Secretary of State for Management; Charlene Lamb, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Programs; Lee Lohman, Executive Director, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; Raymond Maxwell, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Maghreb Affairs; Brian Papanu, Desk Officer, Libya; and William Roebuck, Director, Office of Maghreb Affairs. From the Accountability Review Board, Thomas R. Pickering, Chairman; Michael G. Mullen, Vice Chairman; Catherine A. Bertini; Richard J. Shinnick; and Hugh J. Turner III.

Conclusion From the Report:

“The unclassified ARB report begins with a quote from George Santayana’s 1905 book, *Reason in Common Sense*: “Those that cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Notwithstanding this promising start, the gaps in the ARB review and final report identified by the Committee signal that the State Department may very well be doomed to repeat its past mistakes.

In response to a question about Benghazi at a May 13, 2013 press conference, the President pledged to the American people to “find out what happened.” To this day, more than one year after the attacks, not a single person at the State Department has actually been fired or formally held accountable for the attacks in Benghazi. More importantly, those most accountable for the attacks in Benghazi—the terrorists who attacked U.S. facilities and claimed the lives of four Americans—have not been brought to justice.

The gaps in the ARB’s work are particularly troubling because the Obama Administration has repeatedly touted the ARB report as the final word on failures by the State Department that contributed to the inadequate security posture in Benghazi. The limitations inherent in the ARB’s mandate and the weaknesses in the ARB’s methodology show that a more thorough investigation is necessary. The Committee will continue to examine the events before, during and after the September 11, 2012 attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities to properly assign accountability and to make findings that will inform legislative remedies.”

5. Democratic House Oversight Committee Staff (Democratic) – 9/19/2013

Report Title: “Status Update on Investigations of Attacks on U.S. Personnel and Facilities in Benghazi”

Description: “This report provides a status update on the Committee’s investigation into the U.S. government’s response to the attacks on American personnel and facilities in Benghazi in September 2012, as well as the findings and recommendations of the Accountability Review Board (ARB) led by Ambassador Thomas Pickering and Admiral Michael Mullen....

Prepared at the request of Ranking Member Elijah Cummings, this report attempts to honor the service and sacrifice of the four American heroes killed in Benghazi in service of their country. It provides detailed information in response to questions relating to the attacks, and it is intended to focus on reforms to improve security for our diplomatic corps serving overseas.”

Date of Report: September 19, 2013

Type of Committee: Democratic

Pages: 80

Chair: Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD)

Members: Democratic staff

Conclusion From the Report:

“The Benghazi ARB was one of the most comprehensive ARB reviews ever undertaken...

Accusations that the United States military withheld assets are unfounded...

Benghazi lacked adequate security in part because it was a temporary post...

The [State] Department must ensure that the ARB’s recommendations are fully implemented...

On Sunday, September 15, 2013, Chairman Issa provided to select press outlets a Republican staff report entitled ‘Benghazi Attacks: Investigative Update Interim Report on the Accountability Review Board.’ This report was not provided to Democratic Committee Members until the following day, September 16, 2013, and the report was never considered at an official Committee business meeting where Members could have vetted it for accuracy and completeness. As a result, the report contains numerous mistakes and omits key portions of transcript excerpts that undermine the report’s conclusions.”

6. US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (Bipartisan) – 1/15/2014

Report Title: [“Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012 Together With Additional Views”](#)

Description: “The purpose of this report is to review the September 11-12, 2012, terrorist attacks against two US facilities in Benghazi, Libya. This review by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence... focuses primarily on the analysis by and actions of the Intelligence Community (IC) leading up to, during, and immediately following the attacks.”

Date of Report: January 15, 2014

Type of Committee: Bipartisan

Pages: 91

Chair: Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Chair and Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Vice Chair

Members: Senators John Davison “Jay” Rockefeller IV (D-WV), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Barbara Ann Mikulski (D-MD), Mark Udall (D-CO), Mark Warner (D-VA), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Angus King (I-ME), Richard Burr (R-NC), James Risch (R-ID), Daniel Coats (R-IN), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Susan Collins (R-ME), Tom Coburn (R-OK), Harry Reid (D-NV), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Carl Levin (D-MI), and James Inhofe (R-OK); David Grannis, Staff Director, Martha Scott Poindexter, Minority Staff Director, and Desiree Thompson Sayle, Chief Clerk.

Conclusion From the Report:

“Finding #1: In the months before the attacks on September 11, 2012, the IC [intelligence community] provided ample strategic warning that the security situation in eastern Libya was deteriorating and that the US facilities and personnel were at risk in Benghazi...”

Finding #2: The State Department should have increased its security posture more significantly in Benghazi...

Finding #3: There was no singular ‘tactical warning’ in the intelligence reporting leading up to the events on September 11, 2012, predicting an attack on US facilities in Benghazi on the 9/11 anniversary, although State and the CIA both sent general warning notices to facilities worldwide noting the potential security concerns associated with the anniversary...

Finding #4: Although the IC relied heavily on open source press reports in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the IC conducted little analysis of open source extremist-affiliated social media prior to and immediately after the attacks...

Finding #5: There were ‘tripwires’ designed to prompt a reduction in personnel or the suspension of operations at the Mission facility in Benghazi and although there is evidence that some of them had been crossed, operations continued with minimal change...

Finding #6: The State Department personnel at the Temporary Mission Facility in Benghazi relied on the security officers at the CIA Annex as a last resort for security in the event of an attack...

Finding #7: There were no US military resources in position to intervene in short order in Benghazi...

Finding #8: Unarmed US military military surveillance asses were not delayed when responding to the attack, and they provided important situational awareness...

Finding #9: In finished reports after September 11, 2012, intelligence analysts inaccurately referred to the presence of a protest at the Mission facility before the attack... but without sufficient intelligence or eyewitness statements to corroborate that assertion...

Finding #10: The State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) did not disseminate any independent analysis in the year following the Benghazi attacks...

Finding #11: The DNI's Office of Analytic Integrity and Standards (AIS) failed to provide complete and accurate information to Congress...

Finding #12: The co-location of IC and diplomatic personnel in Benghazi could have enhanced security; but co-location often presents tradeoffs that should be carefully evaluated in high-threat environments...

Finding #13: The primary source of security for the Temporary Mission Facility, local Libyan militia members, failed to provide any significant defense of the compound from the attack...

Finding #14: More than a year after the Benghazi attacks, the terrorists who perpetrated the attacks still have not been brought to justice."

7. House Committee on Foreign Affairs (Republican) – 2/7/2014

Report Title: "[Benghazi: Where is the State Department Accountability?](#)"

Description: "This report shows a State Department that is not focused on accountability."

Date of Report: February 7, 2014

Type of Committee: Republican

Pages: 25

Chair: Representative Ed Royce (R-CA)

Members: Majority Staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee

Conclusion From the Report:

“Systemic failures at the State Department during Secretary Clinton’s tenure resulted in a grossly inadequate security posture in Benghazi. These vulnerabilities contributed to the deaths of four Americans, including the first U.S. ambassador killed in the line of duty since 1979. Americans mourned this loss of life. This tactical defeat at the hands of Islamist terrorists has been made worse by President Obama’s failure to honor his vow to bring the perpetrators to justice.

In order to prevent such attacks in the future, the State Department and other agencies must adapt and improve. The deteriorating security situation in Benghazi was well known, yet nothing was done in response to the warnings from the intelligence community and U.S. personnel on the ground. It may never be known to what extent the President’s repeated claims that al-Qaeda was on —the path to defeat|| affected the decision making of senior officials in Washington. Nevertheless, the U.S. government must learn from this abysmal bureaucratic failure.

The Administration has taken some positive steps towards improving embassy security, but much more remains to be done. To this end, the Committee has supported an active legislative agenda to reform and bolster embassy security. One reform that cannot be legislated, however, is an organization’s culture. The Committee’s oversight work has for good reason stressed the importance of personal accountability within the Department. Without it, no amount of legislation or added funding can make the State Department’s men and women overseas safer. Unfortunately, the Department has not demonstrated a commitment to developing a culture of accountability.

The State Department’s response stands in stark contrast with recent Defense Department disciplinary actions, which held military commanders accountable for what happened on their watch in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan and elsewhere, State Department personnel increasingly face the kind of threats that our men and women in uniform face. They deserve the high standards of accountability that make their Defense Department brethren safer in this dangerous world.

As Chairman Royce noted when questioning Under Secretary Kennedy one year after the Benghazi tragedy, not a single State Department employee has missed a paycheck as a result of the Department’s failure to adequately protect its people in Benghazi. While four employees were temporarily suspended with pay, they were ultimately reassigned to new positions within the Department. The result of this reshuffling is

that no one has been held responsible in a meaningful way for the grossly inadequate security in Benghazi.

The Committee will continue pressing for improvements to U.S. diplomatic security overseas, including doing what it can to promote a culture of accountability. Reforming the Accountability Review Board process – by not only increasing its independence, but also allowing it to recommend dismissals – is central to moving in this important direction.

Accountability, of course, starts at the top. Unfortunately, leadership from the Administration has been sorely missing. While the Committee will continue to press for accountability, it is incumbent upon President Obama and Secretary Kerry to recognize the failures of senior officials and hold them accountable. Otherwise, another Benghazi scenario, in which U.S. personnel are left vulnerable by irresponsible security decision making in Washington, is inevitable.”

8. House Committee on Armed Services (Republican) – 2/10/2014

Report Title: “[Majority Interim Report: Benghazi Investigation Update](#)”

Description: “This report should be considered one component of continuing comprehensive Benghazi- related oversight underway in the U.S. House of Representatives.”

Date of Report: February 10, 2014

Type of Committee: Republican

Pages: 30

Chair: Representative Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (R-CA), Chair and Representative Mac Thornberry (R-TX), Vice Chair

Members: Representative Martha Roby (R-AL), chair of the Oversight and Investigations subcommittee until December 2013, and the five majority (Republican) members of that subcommittee.

Conclusion From the Report:

“I. In assessing military posture in anticipation of the September 11 anniversary, White House officials failed to comprehend or ignored the dramatically deteriorating security situation in Libya and the growing threat to U.S. interests in the region. Official public statements seem to have exaggerated the extent and rigor of the security assessment conducted at the time.

II. U.S. personnel in Benghazi were woefully vulnerable in September 2012 because a.) the administration did not direct a change in military force posture, b.) there was no intelligence of a specific “imminent” threat in Libya, and c.) the Department of State, which has primary responsibility for diplomatic security, favored a reduction of Department of Defense security personnel in Libya before the attack.

III. Defense Department officials believed nearly from the outset of violence in Benghazi that it was a terrorist attack rather than a protest gone awry, and the President subsequently permitted the military to respond with minimal direction.

IV. The U.S. military’s response to the Benghazi attack was severely degraded because of the location and readiness posture of U.S. forces, and because of lack of clarity about how the terrorist action was unfolding. However, given the uncertainty about the prospective length and scope of the attack, military commanders did not take all possible steps to prepare for a more extended operation.

V. There was no “stand down” order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi. However, because official reviews after the attack were not sufficiently comprehensive, there was confusion about the roles and responsibilities of these individuals.

VI. The Department of Defense is working to correct many weaknesses revealed by the Benghazi attack, but the global security situation is still deteriorating and military resources continue to decline.”

9. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (Bipartisan) – 11/21/2014

Title of Report: “[Investigative Report on the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 11-12, 2012](#)”

Description: “The nearly two-year investigation focused on the activities of the Intelligence Community (‘IC’) before, during, and after the attacks.”

Date of Report: November 21, 2014

Type of Committee: Bipartisan, Republican-led

Pages: 36

Chair: Mike Rogers (R-AL)

Members: Ranking Member C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD)

Conclusion From the Report:

“This report is the result of nearly two years of intensive investigation. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence reviewed thousands of pages of intelligence assessments, cables, notes, and emails; held 20 Committee events and hearings; and conducted detailed interviews with senior intelligence officials and eyewitnesses to the attacks, including eight security personnel on the ground in Benghazi that night. Members and Staff spent thousands of hours intensively looking at every aspect of the tragedy. The report is therefore meant to serve as the definitive House statement on the Intelligence Community’s activities before, during and after the tragic events that caused the deaths of four brave Americans. Despite the highly sensitive nature of these activities, the report has endeavored to make the facts and conclusions within this report widely and publicly available so that the American public can separate actual fact from rumor and unsupported innuendo. Only with a full accounting of the facts can we ensure that tragedies like this one never happen again.”

10. House Select Committee on Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi (Republican) – 12/7/2016

Title of Report: [“Final Report of the Select Committee on the events surrounding the 2012 terrorist attack in Benghazi: House of Representatives together with additional and Minority reviews”](#)

Description: On May 8, 2014, the House of Representatives adopted H. Res. 567, establishing the Select Committee on Benghazi. Since Republicans held the majority in the House, they controlled the committee and wrote the main part (600+ pages) of the report.

The report concludes with a 262-page section written by the Democratic members of the committee, who stated that their Republican colleagues refused to include them in the report process. They wrote that Republicans admitted to using this Select Committee to bring down Hillary Clinton’s poll numbers as a presidential candidate. Republican members of the committee stated that their Democratic counterparts sought to impede the investigation.¹⁶

Date of Report: Dec. 7, 2016

Type of Committee: Republican majority, with additional pages by Democratic (minority) committee members.

Pages: 989

Chair: Representative Trey Gowdy (R-SC)

¹⁶ Elise Viebeck, “Gowdy offers biting critique of Benghazi Dems for ‘two-year obstruction’ of investigation,” [washingtonpost.com](#), June 6, 2016

Members: Republican Majority (bulk of report) – Representatives Lynn Westmoreland (R-GA), Jim Jordan (R-OH); Peter Roskam (R-IL), Mike Pompeo (R-KS); Martha Roby (R-AL), Susan Brooks (R-IN); Democratic Minority (additional views) – Representatives Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD), Ranking Member; Adam Smith (D-WA), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Linda Sanchez (D-CA), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)

Conclusion From the Report:

Majority: “Officials at the State Department, including Secretary Clinton, learned almost in real time that the attack in Benghazi was a terrorist attack. With the presidential election just 56 days away, rather than tell the American people the truth and increase the risk of losing an election, the administration told one story privately and a different story publicly. They publicly blamed the deaths on a video-inspired protest they knew had never occurred.”

Minority: “Our overarching conclusion is that the evidence obtained by the Select Committee confirms the core findings already issued by many previous investigations into the attacks in Benghazi.”

VI. No Conclusion

Given the high level of emotions and finger pointing regarding the Benghazi attacks, we decided that any attempt to interpret or categorize the reports might compromise our primary goal of nonpartisanship. Therefore, we offer no conclusion or even commentary on any parts of the reports, but we have endeavored to present them accurately.

We hope the information in this report helps you see the perspectives of how different political bodies reported on what happened in Benghazi on Sept. 11 and 12, 2012, and in the aftermath.

Hopefully the information herein will assist you in deciding whether Benghazi was a cover-up by the Left, the Right’s red herring – or something else or in between.