HPSCI Update on Benghazi

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) continues its extensive review of the events leading up to September 11, 2012, and the attacks in Benghazi, Libya.

HPSCI Benghazi activities this week:

- This week, Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chairman Lynn Westmoreland will lead two Committee events with several eye-witnesses to the attacks, the second event occurring after a lengthy negotiation with the witnesses' counsel.
    - Witness testimony will allow the Committee to continue to evaluate if there are any factual inconsistencies with previous on-the-record testimony received by the Committee, including the timeline of events and any issues surrounding non-disclosure agreements.

Evidence collected and on-the-record testimony received by HPSCI *to date* show that:

- The HPSCI-established timeline (attached) remains accurate.
- All CIA activities in Benghazi were legal and authorized. On-the-record testimony establishes that CIA was **not** sending weapons (including MANPADS) from Libya to Syria, or facilitating other organizations or states that were transferring weapons from Libya to Syria.
- The Annex response team acted heroically to evacuate Americans at the Temporary Mission Facility (TMF).
    - The team responded to a call for help and almost certainly saved lives despite putting the Annex at increased risk and not being a part of the TMF's formal security plan.
    - The Annex team had necessary authority to depart for the TMF. Once prepared, officers engaged in a tactical discussion about the threat they faced at the TMF, and what weapons and external support to bring to TMF. During the discussion, there was a delay as the tactical situation was discussed, but the team was **not** ordered or directed to stand down.
- We have found no CIA officer who has been forced to undergo polygraphs or to sign non-disclosure agreements specific to Benghazi or otherwise dissuaded from or punished for wanting to speak to Congress. Several CIA officials have stated on the record that no such pressure would be tolerated.
- The IC provided significant intelligence reporting and analysis that warned of a deteriorating security environment in Benghazi leading up to the attacks. For example, on April 16 and 17, as much as five months before the attacks, the IC provided clear warning about the activities and the growth of terrorist groups in Benghazi.
- The Administration talking points after the attacks were changed by a bureaucratic coordination process and overemphasized formal intelligence reporting over direct knowledge of officers who assessed that it was a terrorist attack and not a protest gone awry.
- The IC has collected extensive information on many of the Benghazi attackers, but early coordination between IC and DoD was lacking, many intelligence gaps remain, and the Administration has yet to establish a plan to bring known attackers to justice.
- There has been no contradiction to date of the Committee's findings contained in the *Interim Progress Report for*

the Members of the Republican Conference on the Events Surrounding the September 11, 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi, Libya, a report produced at the director of Speaker Boehner.

The HPSCI investigation is still open and has several important upcoming events:

- Committee investigators continue to review every allegation of wrongdoing and seek out any source with potential new information.

- Three weeks ago, HPSCI determined that there was no merit to allegations contained in a September 17, 2013, *Free Beacon* article claiming that a particular employee had been punished for refusing to sign a non-disclosure agreement related to Benghazi. The investigation determined that person was not in Benghazi the night of the attacks or at all in 2012. The person did not sign a non-disclosure agreement related to Benghazi. HPSCI determined that his ongoing dispute with his employer has nothing to do with a non-disclosure agreement or Benghazi, but separate matters including personal conduct issues.

Full Committee events and evidence collection to date:

- The Committee held its first Full Committee event two days after the attacks, on September 13, 2012, with Matt Olsen, Director of the National Counterterrorism Center. That event was followed by a briefing with then-Director of the CIA David Petraeus on September 14, 2012.

- The Committee has held numerous subsequent hearings with CIA, DOD, and ODNI senior officials to discuss the specifics of the attacks, including the intelligence warnings and intelligence activities in eastern Libya prior to the attacks; the events on the ground during the attacks; the fallout after the attacks; and our government's efforts to find the attackers.

- HPSCI held two events with the most-senior intelligence official on the ground during the night of the attacks as well as others with first-hand knowledge of events on the ground.

- ***HPSCI has held more Full Committee events on the Benghazi attacks than on any other issue before this Committee since those attacks.***

- HPSCI has sent five letters to the administration and hundreds of questions and document requests to clarify the timeline of events and to understand the activities of the Intelligence Community before and during the attacks.

- HPSCI has compared the on-the-record testimony with the Intelligence Information Reports (IIRs) from the FBI interviews of the eyewitnesses, each of whom were interviewed by professional investigators in the days after the attacks.

- The Committee has sought all available information to determine whether any pressure or threats of retaliation were made against intelligence professionals on the ground in Benghazi, and to examine whether there were any unauthorized intelligence activities in eastern Libya.

- HSPCI investigators have reviewed thousands of pages of documents, including emails from the night of the attack, and hundreds of intelligence assessments.

Timeline as produced in *Report for the Members of the Republican Conference on the Events Surrounding the September 11, 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi, Libya*.

Timeline of Events

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

Tuesday, December 27, 2011
A State Department memorandum circulated at the end of 2011 recommended that U.S. personnel remain in Benghazi. It explained that many Libyans were "strongly" in favor of a U.S. outpost in Benghazi, in part because they believed a U.S. presence in eastern Libya would ensure that the new Tripoli-based government fairly considered eastern interests.

Wednesday, March 28, 2012
Ambassador Cretz sent a cable to Secretary Clinton requesting additional security assets. Specifically, he asked for the continued deployment of both Mobile Security Detachment (MSD) teams, or at least additional DS agents to replace them, as well as the full five DS agents which the December 2011 memorandum claimed would be stationed in Benghazi.

Friday, April 6, 2012
The Temporary Mission Facility (TMF) in Benghazi came under attack when disgruntled Libyan contract guards allegedly threw a small improvised explosive device (IED) over the perimeter wall. No casualties were reported.

Thursday, April 19, 2012
State responded to Ambassador Cretz's request for additional security assets. The cable response to Tripoli bears Secretary Clinton's signature, and specifically acknowledges Ambassador Cretz's March 28 request for additional security. Despite the Ambassador's March request, the April cable from Clinton stipulates that the plan to drawdown security assets will proceed as planned. The cable further recommends that State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the U.S Mission in Libya conduct a "joint re-assessment of the number of DS agents requested for Benghazi."

Wednesday, June 6, 2012
The TMF was attacked again by unknown assailants who used an IED powerful enough to blow a hole in the perimeter wall. Again, no casualties were reported.

Thursday, June 7, 2012
Ambassador Stevens made a personal plea for an increase in security. In a June 2012 email, he told a Department official that with national elections in July and August, the Mission "would feel much safer if we could keep two MSD teams with us through this period [to support] our staff and [personal detail] for me and the [Deputy Chief of Mission] and any VIP visitors." The Department official replied that due to other commitments and limited resources, "unfortunately, MSD cannot support the request."

Monday, July 9, 2012
A July 2012 cable from Ambassador Stevens stressed that security conditions in Libya had not met the requisite benchmarks established by the Department and the U.S. Mission in Libya to initiate a security drawdown, and requested that security personnel, including the MSD teams, be permitted to stay. After being apprised of this pending request, Deputy Assistant Secretary Charlene Lamb exclaimed: "NO I do not [I repeat] not want them to ask for the MSD team to stay!" The MSD team was withdrawn, though it is unclear whether the Department ever formally rejected the Ambassador's July request.

Monday, June 11, 2012
Britain's ambassador to Libya was in a convoy of cars attacked in the eastern city of Benghazi. The convoy was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). Two protection officers were injured.

Monday, August 27, 2012
U.S. officials were aware that Libya remained volatile. They were particularly concerned with the numerous armed militias that operated freely throughout the country. In August 2011, the State Department warned U.S. citizens against traveling to Libya, explaining that "inter-militia conflict can erupt at any time or any place."

- The security environment in Benghazi was similarly deteriorating throughout 2012. From June 2011 to July 2012, then-

Regional Security Officer (RSO) for Libya Eric Nordstrom, the principal security adviser to the U.S. Ambassador to Libya, compiled a list of over 200 security incidents in Libya, 50 of which took place in Benghazi. These included violent acts directed against diplomats and diplomatic facilities, international organizations, and third-country nationals, as well as large-scale militia clashes.

- In spite of these mounting security concerns, for most of 2012 the Benghazi Mission was forced to rely on fewer than the approved number of DS agents. Specifically, while the State Department memorandum signed by Under Secretary Kennedy claimed that five agents would be provided, this was only the case for 23 days in 2012. Reports indicate the Benghazi Mission was typically staffed with only three agents, and sometimes as few as one or two.

Monday, September 10, 2012

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

SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK TIMELINE

All times are Eastern European Time (EET, Benghazi)

Tuesday, September 11, 2012

~9:42 p.m.

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

9:59 p.m.

An unarmed, unmanned, surveillance aircraft is directed to reposition overhead the Benghazi facility.

~10:02 p.m.

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

10:05 p.m.

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

~10:07 p.m.

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

10:32 p.m.

The National Military Command Center at the Pentagon, after receiving initial reports of the incident from the State Department, notifies the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. The information is quickly passed to Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey. 11:00 p.m. Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey attend a previously scheduled meeting with the President at the White House. The leaders discuss potential responses to the emerging situation.

11:10 p.m.

The diverted surveillance aircraft arrives on station over the Benghazi facility.

~11:15 p.m.

After about 90 minutes of repeated attempts to go into the burning building to search for the Ambassador, the Annex

security team assessed that the security situation was deteriorating and they could not continue their search. The Annex security team loaded all U.S. personnel into two vehicles and departed the TMF for the Annex. The exiting vehicles left under heavy gunfire and faced at least one roadblock in their route to the Annex. The first vehicle left around 11:15 p.m. and the second vehicle departed at about 11:30 p.m. All surviving American personnel departed the facility by 11:30 p.m.

Wednesday, September 12, 2012

12:06 p.m.

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

12:00-2:00 a.m.

Secretary Panetta convenes a series of meetings in the Pentagon with senior officials including General Dempsey and General Ham. They discuss additional response options for Benghazi and for the potential outbreak of further violence throughout the region, particularly in Tunis, Tripoli, Cairo, and Sana'a. During these meetings, Secretary Panetta authorizes: A Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST) platoon, stationed in Rota, Spain, to prepare to deploy to Benghazi, and a second FAST platoon, also stationed in Rota, Spain, to prepare to deploy to the Embassy in Tripoli. A EUCOM special operations force, which is training in Central Europe, to prepare to deploy to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe. A special operations force based in the United States to prepare to deploy to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe. During this period, actions are verbally conveyed from the Pentagon to the affected Combatant Commands in order to expedite movement of forces upon receipt of formal authorization.

12:30 a.m.

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

~1:15 a.m.

The American security team from Tripoli lands in Benghazi.

2:30 a.m.

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

2:39 a.m.

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

2:53 a.m.

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

5:00 a.m.

A second, unmanned, unarmed surveillance aircraft is directed to relieve the initial asset still over Benghazi.

~5:15 a.m.

At around 5:15 a.m., within 15 minutes of the Tripoli team's arrival at the Annex from the airport, a short but deadly coordinated terrorist attack began at the Annex. The attack, which included small arms, rocket-propelled grenade (RPG), and well-aimed mortar fire, killed two American security officers, and severely wounded two others.

6:05 a.m.

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

7:40 a.m.

The first wave of American personnel depart Benghazi for Tripoli via airplane.

10:00 a.m.

The second wave of Americans, including the fallen, depart Benghazi for Tripoli via airplane.

2:15 p.m.

The C-17 departs Germany en route to Tripoli to evacuate Americans.

7:17 p.m.

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

7:57 p.m.

The EUCOM special operations force, and associated equipment, arrives at an intermediate staging base in southern Europe.

8:56 p.m.

The FAST platoon, and associated equipment, arrives in Tripoli.

9:28 p.m.

The special operations force deployed from the United States, and associated equipment, arrives at an intermediate staging

base in southern Europe.

10:19 p.m.

The C-17 arrives in Ramstein, Germany.

END OF SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK TIMELINE

Wednesday, September 12, 2012

FBI formally opens an investigation into the deaths of Ambassador Sevens and the three other Americans killed in the attack.

Relying on analytical intuition with limited reporting on September 12, 2012, IC analysts correctly evaluated soon after the attacks that the event was a terrorist attack against a U.S. facility, likely conducted by Islamic extremists.

Thursday, September 13, 2012

Beginning on September 13, 2012, analysts began receiving and relying on a larger volume of diverse intelligence reporting that referenced protests and demonstrations in Benghazi. Analysts revised their assessments again to determine finally that the attack was deliberate and that a protest was not occurring at the time of the attack. The IC's modification of its assessments reflects the reasonable evolution of tactical intelligence analysis.

Saturday, September 15, 2012

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

Sunday, September 16, 2012

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

Wednesday, September 19, 2012

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

Thursday, September 20, 2012

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

Friday, September 21, 2012

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

Thursday, October 4, 2012

Due to security concerns and bureaucratic entanglements among the Departments of Justice, State, and Defense, the FBI team investigating the terrorist attack did not access the crime scene until more than three weeks later, on October 4, 2012. The FBI spent less than one day collecting evidence at the TMF. FBI officials indicated that the security situation delayed and undermined a more thorough investigation of the site.

Secretary Clinton convened an Accountability Review Board (ARB), headed by Thomas Pickering, a retired U.S. ambassador, to examine the facts and circumstances of the attacks and to report findings and recommendations.

Tuesday, October, 9, 2012

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

Tuesday, November 27, 2012

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