



SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI



*HONORING COURAGE, IMPROVING SECURITY, AND
FIGHTING THE EXPLOITATION OF A TRAGEDY*

Report of the Democratic Members

June 2016



**Select Committee on the Events Surrounding
the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi**

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June 27, 2016
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Democratic Members of the Benghazi Select Committee submit this report in honor of the memories of Ambassador Christopher Stevens, Sean Smith, Tyrone Woods, and Glen Doherty; the other extraordinary heroes in Benghazi and Tripoli who risked life and limb to help their fellow Americans; and the men and women of the Defense Department, State Department, and Intelligence Community who serve the United States every day around the world.

We deeply regret that this report is not bipartisan. In May, we asked Chairman Trey Gowdy to work with us on a joint report with conclusions we could all agree on, followed by areas on which we may disagree. We also offered to provide him with a draft of our report in advance. But Chairman Gowdy mocked our request as “mildly amusing.”

We are issuing our own report today because, after spending more than two years and \$7 million in taxpayer funds in one of the longest and most partisan congressional investigations in history, it is long past time for the Select Committee to conclude its work. Despite our repeated requests over the last several months, Republicans have refused to provide us with a draft of their report—or even a basic outline—making it impossible for us to provide input and obvious that we are being shut out of the process until the last possible moment.

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. Although the Select Committee obtained additional details that provide context and granularity, these details do not fundamentally alter the previous conclusions.

Section I of our report begins by highlighting the bravery of our first responders on the night of the attacks. U.S. personnel in Benghazi and Tripoli conducted themselves with extraordinary courage and heroism and at grave personal risk to defend and rescue their fellow Americans. Our report provides poignant new details about how their actions saved lives.

Our report makes 21 findings based on the evidence we obtained, and it debunks many conspiracy theories about the attacks. In general, the report finds:

- The Defense Department could not have done anything differently on the night of the attacks that would have saved the lives of the four brave Americans killed in Benghazi, and although the military’s global posture prevented it from responding more quickly that night, improvements were made years ago.
- The State Department’s security measures in Benghazi were woefully inadequate as a result of decisions made by officials in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, but Secretary Clinton never personally denied any requests for additional security in Benghazi.

- The Intelligence Community’s assessments evolved after the attacks as more information became available, but they were not influenced by political considerations.
- Administration officials did not make intentionally misleading statements about the attacks, but instead relied on information they were provided at the time under fast-moving circumstances.

There are some findings this report does not make. For example, an offensive, anti-Muslim video sparked protests and anti-American violence in Cairo and throughout the region, but it remains unclear to this day precisely what motivated all of the individuals in Benghazi on the night of the attacks. During his interview with the Select Committee just this past March, the former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), General David Petraeus, told us:

I’m still not absolutely certain what absolutely took place, whether it was a mix of people that are demonstrating with attackers in there, whether this is an organized demonstration to launch an attack, whether—because you’ll recall, there’s a lot of SIGINT [signals intelligence] that we uncovered that very clearly seemed to indicate that there was a protest and it grew out of the protest. ... And there is a video of what took place. And they are just basically milling around out there. So if this is an attack, you know, maybe they rehearsed it to look like a protest, but maybe it was actually a mix. And so, again, I’m still not completely set in my own mind of what—and to be candid with you, I am not sure that the amount of scrutiny spent on this has been in the least bit worth it.

Section II of our report documents the grave abuses that Select Committee Republicans engaged in during this investigation.

Republicans excluded Democrats from interviews, concealed exculpatory evidence, withheld interview transcripts, leaked inaccurate information, issued unilateral subpoenas, sent armed Marshals to the home of a cooperative witness, and even conducted political fundraising by exploiting the deaths of four Americans.

In one of the most serious abuses, Chairman Gowdy personally and publicly accused Secretary Clinton of compromising a highly classified intelligence source. Although the Intelligence Community quickly debunked his claim, Chairman Gowdy has yet to apologize to Secretary Clinton for his slanderous accusation.

In our opinion, Chairman Gowdy has been conducting this investigation like an overzealous prosecutor desperately trying to land a front-page conviction rather than a neutral judge of facts seeking to improve the security of our diplomatic corps.

Decades in the future, historians will look back on this investigation as a case study in how not to conduct a credible investigation. They will showcase the proliferation of Republican abuses as a chief example of what happens when politicians are allowed to use unlimited taxpayer dollars—and the formidable power of Congress—to attack their political foes.

The Republican plan was laid bare when Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy admitted on national television that House Republicans established the Select Committee to bring down Secretary Clinton's poll numbers.

The delay by Republicans in issuing their report is no accident. They have waited until directly before the presidential conventions for maximum political impact, but the American people see through this partisan ploy. Republicans have tried to blame everyone else for their own delays, but their claims are ludicrous. Republicans have forfeited their credibility by delaying this report repeatedly in order to push it into the presidential election year.

In addition to issuing our report today, we are posting online all of the unclassified interview transcripts under our control so the American people can judge for themselves the integrity of this investigation and its findings.

This set of transcripts is not complete. Since February, Chairman Gowdy has withheld copies of transcripts from Democratic Members in violation of House rules. In order to use portions of these transcripts in this report, our staff members were often forced to take notes by hand in Chairman Gowdy's offices during limited time periods with Republican "minders" present.

Chairman Gowdy also continues to block the release of the transcript of Sidney Blumenthal's deposition, during which the Chairman and other Republicans asked hundreds of questions unrelated to the attacks in Benghazi in an effort to conduct political opposition research on Secretary Clinton's colleagues and supporters. References in our report to this transcript must remain redacted until Chairman Gowdy reverses his position and allows the public to see them.

Our report makes 12 recommendations. Because the fundamental goal of the Democratic Members has always been to improve the security of our diplomatic corps and Americans serving our country overseas, we make nine recommendations to improve security measures, security training, risk management processes, and support for survivors and their families. We also make three recommendations for Congress to consider before establishing any future select committees.

Set forth below are selected highlights from our report.

COURAGE AND HEROISM OF FIRST RESPONDERS

The evidence obtained by the Select Committee demonstrates that Diplomatic Security agents, personnel from the nearby CIA Annex, and a security team that flew from Tripoli to Benghazi all showed remarkable courage throughout the harrowing attacks.

Before the attacks began, several Diplomatic Security agents heard "some kind of chanting" as a crowd moved closer to the compound, but the agents could not understand what they were saying because they did not speak Arabic.

Attackers breached the main gate of the compound, and one agent told us that "the doors were blown open." He said "about 70 individuals, you know, rushed into the building" where

the Ambassador was located. They broke glass and furniture, looted the buildings, and set fire to the residence, which quickly filled with toxic smoke.

Agents repeatedly risked their lives and rushed back into the burning building to try to save Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith.

“I had seconds left of life,” one agent told us. He explained: “[T]he smoke and heat were so intense that, I mean, the smoke was coming in through my eyes, even though they were closed. It was coming in through my nose. And I stayed in there until I physically couldn’t do it anymore.” Another agent said it was almost “as if you had your eyes closed.” He added: “You couldn’t see your hand in front of your face.”

When the security team arrived from the Annex, they also rushed into the burning building. “It was so hot. You couldn’t see the end of your gun, even with the flashlight on; the smoke was so thick,” one security team member told us. Another said: “it was the most extreme heat I’ve ever felt. You could barely take a breath or two in there before you had to come back out.”

They were able to locate Sean Smith, who had died from the intense smoke, but not Ambassador Stevens. Concerned that attackers were “massing for a counter assault,” the team eventually traveled back to the Annex, where both State Department and Annex personnel took up fighting positions on the rooftops.

During a “lull” in the subsequent fighting, a security team from Tripoli arrived at the Benghazi airport. After receiving reports that the Ambassador had been taken to a local hospital, they tried to obtain transportation from Libyan security forces to get to the hospital. When they learned of the Ambassador’s death, they traveled instead to the Annex and joined in its defense shortly before dawn.

Several security team members explained how a deadly mortar struck the Annex, killing Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty and causing life-threatening injuries to American personnel.

One team member described how he treated a survivor: “I started putting a tourniquet on his arm. He was bleeding from his left arm. He had a hole in his neck, and he had a hole in his chest. So I put tourniquets on his arm and started patching up with the help of others from the shrapnel wounds. And it seemed like seconds later when I heard somebody say, [Redacted], I have another one for you.”

Treating another survivor, the team member said that the survivor’s “right foot was hanging off” and that he “had a hole in his left arm” and “had several shrapnel holes in his head.” In response, the team member “readjusted the tourniquet on his right leg, put another one on his right leg, and ended up putting a tourniquet on his left arm and packing his neck with combat gauze to help stop the bleeding.”

The team continued to provide lifesaving care during the flight to Tripoli and after they landed. One team member explained how a survivor on the plane “stopped breathing, so I had to give him CPR.”

Witnesses praised the efforts of two more individuals in Tripoli—a Special Forces-trained medic and a State Department nurse—who took over medical care when the team landed there. One team member explained: “As soon as I put them on stretchers, we carried them off the plane, they started on them; they started helping the ambulance drivers.”

These heroic actions were universally praised by the witnesses we interviewed.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said “there’s no question in my mind that they took the initiative” and “saved lives.” Secretary Clinton recounted: “[T]he agent who had been in the hospital all those months, as I was leaving, he called me over and he said: Secretary, please do everything you can to make sure I get to go back in the field. And I told him I would.”

“[I]t was one of the bravest and more courageous things I have ever seen,” the CIA Chief of Base in Benghazi told us. He added: “I think that, in many ways, we owe our lives to them.” The Deputy Chief of Base agreed: “I have the utmost respect for their capabilities, their heroism, what they did that night. I’m alive today because of their efforts, and I never forget that for a minute.”

The Deputy Director of the CIA, Michael Morell, called the first responders in Benghazi and Tripoli “absolute heroes” who “saved lives.” He added: “And a lot more people would have died without my guys acting with the bravery that they did. And I don’t want that lost ever, ever, ever.”

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Evidence obtained by the Select Committee confirmed the findings of Republicans on the House Committee on Armed Services in 2014 that the U.S. military could not have done anything differently on the night of the attacks that would have saved the lives of the four brave Americans killed in Benghazi. Chairman Gowdy admitted this on national television, as did his chief counsel during closed-door interviews with military officials.

Secretary Panetta explained that he and General Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with President Obama at the White House after being notified of the attacks in Benghazi, and “the President made clear that we ought to use all of the resources at our disposal to try to make sure we did everything possible to try to save lives there.”

Secretary Panetta returned to the Pentagon at about 6 p.m. and “immediately” convened a meeting with his chief military advisors, including General Dempsey; General Carter Ham, the Commander of U.S. Africa Command; General John Kelly, Secretary Panetta’s Senior Military Assistant; and others.

Secretary Panetta asked his advisors: “[W]hat are the immediate resources we can deploy in order to try to save these lives and do what we can? And they are the ones that made the recommendation of the teams that I then ordered to be in place.”

Secretary Panetta ordered the deployment of two Marine Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST) platoons stationed in Spain, the Combatant Commander’s In-Extremis Force (CIF)

based in Germany and on assignment in Croatia, and a special operations force based in the United States.

Secretary Panetta was clear: “I never had a question then and I don’t even have a question now that we did everything possible to try to see if we could save lives, in line with the President’s order.”

General Ham told the Select Committee there was “a very, very noticeable and profound sense of urgency, and I certainly detected no hesitation from any other combatant command, defense agency, or any other to be responsive to the command’s needs.” He said: “[T]he best phrase I can use is it was ‘all hands on deck’ to find, continually pursue options to address this evolving situation.”

Admiral Kurt Tidd, Director for Operations for the Joint Staff, said he felt “an enormous sense of urgency.”

Witnesses explained again why strike aircraft were not an appropriate option. Secretary Panetta told us: “Okay, yeah, so F-16s go in there and they drop a lot of bombs, but where is the Ambassador? Where are our people? What’s happening. You don’t just do that. You’ve got to have information.”

General Ham explained his decision not to send strike aircraft, warning that “it could’ve made things worse” by “causing friendly casualties, American or Libyan” or “causing casualties amongst noncombatants, which would further incite things.” He explained that they lacked the necessary “detailed information about the situation on the ground, a specific means of targeting and target designation” as well as “the ability to posture forces for recovery of a downed pilot should you lose an aircraft.” Others agreed:

- General Philip Breedlove, Commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe: “I completely agree with the judgment not to use kinetic weapons via fighter aircraft in that environment.”
- Major General Michael Repass, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command-Europe: “If you are blindly throwing ordnance at somebody out there, you are going to inadvertently kill people who ought not be killed.”
- General John Kelly, Senior Military Assistant to Secretary Panetta: “[T]o drop bombs without knowing what you’re dropping the bombs on might make people feel good, but it may be counterproductive, particularly when it’s killing or hurting the wrong people.”

Military witnesses explained—as they had two years earlier to the House Committee on Armed Services—why the military’s global posture prior to the attacks prevented it from responding more quickly.

General Dempsey previously testified that “response forces, at some level, will eventually rely upon basing,” and “we don’t have any basing rights in Africa.” He added that “the tyranny of distance on the African continent is rather remarkable,” calling the time it takes to travel “overwhelming.”

Although some units did not meet their internal target timelines, General Ham explained that these units “would not have been in position to affect the outcome as things eventually played out on the ground.”

Witnesses explained that the military already made significant changes several years ago to substantially improve the military’s ability to respond to crises at diplomatic facilities worldwide. General Ham described these changes as “a tremendous improvement over the situation of just a few years ago” and “a huge benefit and improvement in crisis response.”

Not a single witness substantiated offensive Republican claims that Secretary Clinton or anyone else ordered Secretary Panetta or the military to “stand down.” Secretary Panetta told us that “if somebody had said that, I think, you know, it would not have interfered with my orders to proceed.” When asked again, he replied: “No. Never, never. It would have been against everything that the military stands for. ... To even imply that somehow the military, or someone would have said, maybe we shouldn’t go, it’s too risky, it’s crazy. It’s just not the way our military operates.”

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The evidence obtained by the Select Committee confirms the findings of the Accountability Review Board (ARB) that security measures in Benghazi were woefully inadequate as a result of decisions made by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS).

In a portion of its report that was not released publicly in 2012, the Board found that the Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Programs “did not give sufficient weight to the judgments put forward by most DS agents on the ground.” The Board was “troubled” by her responses, “and in some instances lack of formal responses,” to the “repeated requests for additional security staffing that were made from post.”

The Board concluded that the Deputy Assistant Secretary “showed a lack of proactive leadership, management oversight and transparency in ensuring adequate security support for one of the U.S. government’s most vulnerable overseas posts—a vulnerability that was known to her.”

The Deputy Chief of Mission in Libya through June of 2012 told the Select Committee that the Deputy Assistant Secretary “was the decisionmaker” and was often “a roadblock and very unhelpful.”

Contrary to repeated Republican claims, not a single witness we spoke to identified any evidence that Secretary Clinton personally denied security requests in Benghazi. Five Republican House Chairmen first made this accusation in 2013, and Rep. Darrell Issa repeated it on national television. These and similar claims have been debunked repeatedly by the *Washington Post* Fact Checker, the *Tampa Bay Times* PolitiFact, and others.

During our hearing with Secretary Clinton, Rep. Pompeo argued that the Select Committee had obtained “over 600 requests” for security from Benghazi, but he refused to provide the evidence for his claim.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump took up this allegation himself, claiming: “Look at Benghazi, our ambassador. He wired her 500 or 600 times asking for help.” The Fact Checker called his baseless accusation “a whopper.”

None of the witnesses we interviewed—including those on the ground in Benghazi—recommended withdrawing from Benghazi in 2012. In fact, just weeks before the attacks, Ambassador Stevens and Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Hicks were pressing for a permanent U.S. presence there. In a draft proposal, they wrote that “a permanent platform” would “protect U.S. national security interests in the region” and “promote a stronger, healthier and more vibrant bilateral relationship with the new, free, and democratic Libya.”

Secretary Clinton was active and engaged on the night of the attacks and in the days that followed. In the hours directly after the attacks, she spoke with President Obama, the National Security Advisor, the CIA Director, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She also spoke with Libyan General National Congress President Magariaf, and she consulted with a host of officials within the State Department.

She personally participated in a Secure Video TeleConference (SVTCS) with senior officials from the Intelligence Community, White House, and Department of Defense. Her Deputy Chief of Staff, Jacob Sullivan, explained: “[S]he took the really unusual step of a cabinet Secretary walking into a working level operational SVTCS because she wasn’t going to stand on ceremony. She wanted to be there to make sure that we were doing everything we could.”

Mr. Sullivan described Secretary Clinton’s “enormous sense of urgency” and said she “kicked it into high gear, and she got very focused and began the process of trying to execute a strategy to get our people out of Benghazi safely.” According to Mr. Sullivan, her approach was: “I am not going to rest until we get Chris Stevens back, and I’m going to do everything in my power to make that happen.”

Secretary Clinton’s Chief of Staff at the time, Cheryl Mills, described Secretary Clinton as “very concerned,” “very determined,” and “worried” about U.S. teams on the ground in Libya and elsewhere, and said Secretary Clinton was “devastated” about the deaths of Americans in Benghazi.

Ms. Mills said Secretary Clinton “spent time reaching out to our team in Tripoli, constantly trying to determine if they had what they needed, constantly trying to remind people that, while we all have jobs, people are fragile and you have to remember the fragility of people and their humanity and you have to give respect to that.”

Mr. Sullivan explained: “Over the next few days, we had our posts assaulted by protestors in a number of cities, and every day she’d show up early and go home late, helping manage the response, calling foreign officials where she needed to get more help, calling interagency colleagues when she needed to get marines or other security personnel in place.”

Ms. Mills said Secretary Clinton “made herself consistently present to people on her team because she wanted them to know that, as hard as this was, this was something that required us all to bear witness, to learn, and to try to be the very best we could in those moments.”

THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

The evidence obtained by the Select Committee confirms the bipartisan findings of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that assessments and information provided by the Intelligence Community to government officials changed repeatedly in the days and weeks following the attacks, in part based on new information that became available to intelligence analysts.

Not a single witness appearing before the Select Committee identified evidence that intelligence assessments or CIA talking points provided to Congress and Ambassador Rice were influenced by political considerations.

- On September 12, 2012, an Executive Update and Situation Report stated that the “presence of armed assailants from the incident’s outset suggests this was an intentional assault and not the escalation of a peaceful protest.”
- On September 13, 2012, a fully coordinated Intelligence Community assessment stated that “the attacks began spontaneously following the protests at the U.S. embassy in Cairo” and that “[e]xtremists with ties to al-Qa’ida were involved in the attacks.”
- On September 15, 2012, talking points drafted by the CIA stated that “the demonstrations in Benghazi were spontaneously inspired by the protests at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo and evolved into a direct assault against the U.S. diplomatic post in Benghazi and subsequently its annex” and referenced “indications that extremists participated in the violent demonstrations.”
- On September 24, 2012, a revised Intelligence Community assessment—issued after the review of surveillance video from the State Department compound and the distribution of reports from FBI interviews of officials on the ground—stated that analysts’ assessments “gradually evolved from what we first conveyed” and that “[o]ur most credible information indicates that there was not a protest ongoing at the time of the attack as first reported.”

CIA Director Petraeus explained that video from the compound “took a while to come back” and that analysts did not immediately receive the reports of FBI interviews: “The State Department folks got sequestered in Germany, I think, where they were interviewed, and we didn’t get that information for quite some time.”

In addition, although an extremist group called Ansar al-Sharia initially claimed responsibility for the attacks, the group withdrew its claim the following day, stating that the attacks were “a spontaneous and popular uprising in response to what the West did.”

The Director of the CIA Office of Terrorism Analysis told the Select Committee that “in any fast-breaking event, like the attacks in Benghazi, analysts attempt to strike a balance of providing our best understanding of the events, and waiting for additional reporting to come in to bring the picture into sharper focus.”

She explained why the analysts assessed that there was a protest: “[I]n their mind,

they believe there had been a protest. They believed that that protest turned into an assault on the compound. Whether that was that the protest took place as a cover for an assault, whether the protest was something that individuals were opportunistically taking advantage of in the past, they just didn't know."

CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell told the Select Committee: "I know analysts better than I think I know my own kids. And if the analysts had believed that what they had written was somehow being turned for political reasons, or if the analysts had believed that I was somehow editing the talking points for political reasons, they would have gone crazy."

He explained that there were "a dozen or so sources that suggested to them, told them there was a protest, and there were zero, zero sources saying there wasn't a protest, when they made that judgment on the 12th and published it on the 13th."

Deputy Director Morrell also explained the process for developing the CIA talking points: "The talking points were exactly what the analysts thought. Politics was not in anybody's mind." He added: "[N]obody who was doing the work in the intelligence community recognized that there were any politics here at all to begin with. It was only later that it became political."

CIA Director Petraeus, who reviewed the talking points before they were provided to Congress, confirmed that changes in the final drafts were "understandable" and that Deputy Director Morell played a "forthright role." He told the Select Committee: "I think the folks that were engaged in that were faithfully trying to carry out their respective duties."

Considerable attention has been focused on public allegations that the CIA Chief of Base in Benghazi told the security team at the Annex to "stand down" before responding to the attack on the State Department Special Mission Compound.

The Select Committee interviewed all surviving members of the security team. One reported that the Chief of Base in Benghazi directed him to "stand down." In his previous appearance before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in 2013, this security team member did not mention that the Chief of Base directed him to "stand down."

A second security team member told the Select Committee that he did not hear the words "stand down" directly, but was told about them by the other security team member on the night of the attacks. He did not share this information with the Intelligence Committee.

The Chief of Base in Benghazi told the Select Committee that he did not use the term "stand down," but he confirmed that he told the security team to wait while he tried to obtain additional help from local security forces.

Although there is a disagreement about whether the words "stand down" were uttered, witnesses agreed that the team was told to wait while CIA officials in Libya requested security assistance from local Libyan forces, and they generally agreed that it was appropriate to try to obtain this additional security assistance.

None of the witnesses appearing before the Select Committee identified any evidence that CIA officials were motivated by political or improper motives or that their decisions were

directed by any officials outside Libya.

CIA Director Petraeus, a former military commander, said the decision to seek local support to help prevent an ambush was “a very reasonable precaution to take.” The CIA Chief of Station in Tripoli, the most senior U.S. intelligence official in Libya, said the direction by the Chief of Base in Benghazi was “absolutely” reasonable and that if he had not made it, “it would have been negligent.”

One individual on the ground told the Select Committee that the Chief of Base was “the most experienced operator on that base when it came to judging operational decision-making.”

Some security team members criticized the length of time that passed before the team departed, asserting that they might have been able to save Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith if they had left earlier. One acknowledged that this likely would have cost more lives: “Now, would we have probably died? Yes, probably. So, it’s okay. It’s our job.”

Another said he felt the wait became too long, but he “respected the fact that he wanted us to wait and see if he can gather additional fire power to help.”

Like its predecessors, the Select Committee identified no evidence of an advance warning of the attacks to the Intelligence Community and no evidence to substantiate Republican claims that the CIA was collecting or shipping arms from Libya to Syria or elsewhere.

NO INTENTIONALLY MISLEADING PUBLIC STATEMENTS

For more than three years, Republicans have accused Administration officials of intentionally misleading the American people about the attacks in Benghazi. In 2013—well before House Speaker John Boehner chose him to lead the Select Committee—Chairman Gowdy proclaimed: “[W]e know we were lied to.”

The evidence obtained by the Select Committee demonstrates that these claims are baseless. Republicans simply disregard the fact that the intelligence reports changed repeatedly, and the Administration’s statements changed with them.

Not one person interviewed by the Select Committee provided any evidence of an intentional effort to misrepresent the facts. Instead, they described how they were devastated by the loss of their friends and colleagues in Benghazi and how they focused urgently on the safety of U.S. personnel as demonstrations and violence continued throughout the week across the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere.

Secretary Clinton’s statements on September 11 and 12, 2012, tracked early reporting from the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli that Ansar al-Sharia “claimed responsibility and called for an attack on Embassy Tripoli on Facebook and Twitter.” They also tracked an early intelligence report that “the presence of armed assailants from the incident’s outset suggests this was an intentional assault and not the escalation of a peaceful protest.”

On the night of the attacks, Secretary Clinton called the President of the Libyan General National Congress to ask for help and referenced Ansar al-Sharia’s claim of responsibility. She

added: “I also need you to help us in Tripoli. We have seen serious threats on social media sites, like Facebook, and it is important that your government take all possible measures, in an urgent manner, to secure our facilities.”

Later that night, Secretary Clinton emailed her daughter and again referenced that two officers had been killed by an al-Qaida-like group, which tracked the reporting at the time.

The next day, she told the Egyptian Prime Minister it was “a planned attack—not a protest,” and that it “had nothing to do with the film.” She again referenced Ansar al-Sharia’s claim of responsibility and again asked for help to “lower the temperature on everything that is going on and to make sure this does not happen again today, tomorrow, or after Friday prayer.”

In her public statements, Secretary Clinton said: “Some have sought to justify this vicious behavior as a response to inflammatory material posted on the Internet.” This statement was accurate.

Victoria Nuland, the State Department’s spokesperson and a former advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney, told Congress in 2013 that she helped write this statement because groups across the region “were applauding the attack,” and there was “considerable cheerleading on social media throughout the region for violence against U.S. missions, facilities, personnel.” She said the attacks were “linked in social media to a response to the movie” and “pent up anger.” She said the purpose of the statement was to address “a larger community in the broader Middle East and North Africa,” to “calm things,” and to “help our embassies and both governments secure security.”

The Select Committee chose not to re-interview Ms. Nuland.

The Select Committee did re-interview Jacob Sullivan, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, who drafted the statement with Ms. Nuland, and he corroborated Ms. Nuland’s testimony from 2013. He explained: “my first concern in getting this out was to do everything we could to try to help prevent further violence from happening.” He said they chose the words “carefully” because they “didn’t know the motives of the actual attackers of Benghazi.”

On September 13, the Intelligence Community issued another product, which was the first “fully coordinated” intelligence assessment. The title of this assessment was “Extremists Capitalized on Benghazi Protests.” It stated that “the attacks began spontaneously following the protests at the U.S. embassy in Cairo.” This assessment became the basis for talking points drafted later that week by the CIA, cleared by the Intelligence Community, and provided to Congress and Ambassador Rice.

Mr. Sullivan explained that “this was a fast-moving situation with a lot of information coming in,” and they “went back and forth on what exactly had happened in Benghazi.” He explained that “to this day, people haven’t been able to figure out exactly who the attackers were, exactly what motivated them, so certainly in that first week, we weren’t going to. All we could do was the best with the information we had at the time was, and that’s what we did.”

Secretary Clinton testified to the Select Committee that the “intelligence community, which took the lead on trying to sort this out, as they should have, went through a series of interpretations and analysis. And we were all guided by that.”

Ambassador Rice also explained during her interview with the Select Committee how she relied on the CIA's talking points when she spoke about the Benghazi attacks on five Sunday news shows on September 16, 2012.

She said she relied on the "intelligence community's current best assessment," which "mirrored very closely the finished intelligence products that I had received."

She added: "[F]or me to go out and try to second guess the intelligence community or glean individual pieces of information and make my own judgments would have been to substitute my personal judgment for the best assessment of the intelligence community. ... And it would have been highly inappropriate."

Ben Rhodes, the Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications, confirmed Ambassador Rice's account, stating: "given that we had a process underway to compile the best assessment of the intelligence community for public use at that time, it stood to reason that she should use those points in her appearances."

He created a separate document to prepare Ambassador Rice for a wide range of issues she could be asked about, but on the "specific question of what happened in Benghazi, our expressed intent was to provide her with the HPSCI [House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence] talking points to inform her as to the position of the intelligence community."

Ambassador Rice's spokesperson at the United Nations, who staffed her before and during the Sunday shows, corroborated this account and dismissed as "frustrating" allegations that Ambassador Rice intentionally misled the public. She explained: "I think those of us who give our lives to public service expect more. And I also think it does a disservice to our colleagues whose lives were lost to perpetuate conspiracy theories."

The Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, responded to Republican criticism of Ambassador Rice in 2013, testifying that it was "unfair because the hit she took, I didn't think that was appropriate." He added: "She was going on what we had given her, and that was our collective best judgment at the time as to what should have been said."

The Under Secretary of State for Management, Patrick Kennedy, testified in 2012: "If any administration official, including any career official, were on television on Sunday, September 16th, they would have said what Ambassador Rice said. The information she had at that point from the Intelligence Community is the same that I had at that point."

The Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Matt Olsen, told the Select Committee that he "certainly" would have used the talking points: "[I]f I knew they came from Michael Morell and I knew that others had looked at them, that would give me more confidence—that would give me confidence if I were a policymaker, whether in the Executive Branch or Congress, relying on these as a basis for a public statement, yes."

He made clear to the Select Committee that "what she said was accurate." Although he felt that her "demeanor" and "the way in which she phrased her comments" were in some ways "more unequivocal," these were "small differences," according to Mr. Olsen. He concluded: "in terms of the facts that she conveyed, my sense was that they were fully consistent with what we were assessing at the time."

It was not until September 24, 2012, that the Intelligence Community disseminated a revised assessment after surveillance video from the State Department compound were reviewed and the FBI disseminated reports of their interviews with officials on the ground.

REPUBLICAN ABUSES—FROM A TO Z

The Select Committee has broken its promise to the American people—to address the attacks in Benghazi in a fair, credible, and bipartisan manner.

On May 11, 2014, directly after the Select Committee was established, Chairman Gowdy stated on national television: “I have said from day one I want this to transcend politics and I want it to inspire trust in you and our fellow citizens.”

He also predicted that “if we overplay our hand or if we engage in a process that is not fair according to the American people, we will be punished as we should be for that.”

The abuse of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds for partisan purposes—to influence a presidential election—discredits the House of Representatives.

It is a disservice to the American public, the men and women who serve our nation abroad, and the families of those who were killed during the attacks.

To create a historical record for Congress to consult before establishing any future select committees, Section II of this report sets forth the abusive conduct of Republicans on the Benghazi Select Committee in subsections A through Z.