



**U.S. 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**

January 15, 2014

**SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE**

**United States Senate**

**113<sup>th</sup> Congress**

**Exhibit 1**

***SSCI Review of the Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Facilities in Benghazi,  
Libya, September 11-12, 2012***

**I. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to review the September 11-12, 2012, terrorist attacks against two U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya. This review by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (hereinafter “SSCI” or “the Committee”) focuses primarily on the analysis by and actions of the Intelligence Community (IC) leading up to, during, and immediately following the attacks. The report also addresses, as appropriate, other issues about the attacks as they relate to the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of State (State or State Department).

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that diplomacy and intelligence collection are inherently risky, and that all risk cannot be eliminated. Diplomatic and intelligence personnel work in high-risk locations all over the world to collect information necessary to prevent future attacks against the United States and our allies. Between 1998 (the year of the terrorist attacks against the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania) and 2012, 273 significant attacks were carried out against U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel.<sup>1</sup> The need to place personnel in high-risk locations carries significant vulnerabilities for the United States. The Committee intends for this report to help increase security and reduce the risks to our personnel serving overseas and to better explain what happened before, during, and after the attacks.

**II. THE COMMITTEE’S REVIEW**<sup>2</sup>

Hearings, Briefings, and Meetings: The Committee began its initial review of the September 11, 2012, terrorist attacks against the U.S facilities in Benghazi, Libya, on September 13, 2012, which transitioned into a formal review a few

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, *Significant Attacks Against U.S. Diplomatic Facilities and Personnel, 1998-2012*, revised July 2013. This report also states on page i: “This information is not an all-inclusive compilation; rather, it is a reasonably comprehensive listing of significant attacks.”

<sup>2</sup> The Committee notes that the IC, State, and DoD provided the Committee with hundreds of key documents throughout this review, although sometimes with a significant amount of resistance, especially from State. This lack of cooperation unnecessarily hampered the Committee’s review.

weeks later. This report and our findings and recommendations are based upon the extensive work conducted by Committee Members and staff during this review, including the following hearings, briefings, and meetings (which included interviews of U.S. personnel on the ground during the attacks):

- Three Committee oversight hearings with witnesses from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), State, and DoD;
- Two Committee briefings with David Petraeus—one while he was CIA Director and one after his resignation;
- Three Committee briefings with Robert Litt, ODNI General Counsel, regarding the issue of the CIA Talking Points;
- Four on-the record Member and staff meetings with:
  1. Gregory Hicks, Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) in Tripoli during the attacks;<sup>3</sup>
  2. Mark Thompson, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism at the State Department;
  3. Eric Nordstrom, former Regional Security Officer (RSO) in Libya; and
  4. the former CIA Chief of Base in Benghazi who was at the Annex on the night of the attacks; and
- At least 17 other staff briefings and meetings, including interviews of U.S. Government security personnel on the ground in Benghazi the night of the attacks.

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<sup>3</sup> Mr. Hicks met with Committee staff, without Senators, in a follow-up session. See SSCI Transcript, *Staff Interview of Gregory Hicks*, June 19, 2003.

[REDACTED]

Documents and Video Reviewed: The Committee reviewed: (1) thousands of intelligence reports and internal documents (including e-mails, cables, etc.) which were provided by the IC, the State Department, and DoD; (2) written responses to Committee questions for the record; (3) numerous open-source materials; and (4) surveillance videos related to the attacks.

### **III. DESCRIPTION OF THE SEPTEMBER 11-12, 2012, ATTACKS**

The sequence of events in Benghazi on the night of September 11, 2012, and the morning of September 12, 2012, have been widely described in media and other reports. There were effectively at least three different attacks against U.S. facilities in fewer than eight hours. Understanding the evolution and the sequence of attacks is important to provide the context in which Americans in Benghazi and Tripoli and U.S. officials in Washington, D.C., evaluated events as they unfolded and formulated operational and policy responses. Below are the key details about the three attacks.

#### **1. Attack on the U.S. Temporary Mission Facility at Approximately 9:40 p.m.**

At approximately 9:40 p.m. Benghazi time, on September 11, 2012, dozens of attackers easily gained access to the U.S. Temporary Mission Facility (hereinafter “the TMF,” “the Mission facility,” or “the Mission compound”) by scaling and then opening the front vehicle gate.<sup>4</sup> Over the course of the entire attack on the TMF, at least 60 different attackers entered the U.S. compound and can be seen on the surveillance video recovered from the Mission facility.<sup>5</sup> The attackers moved unimpeded throughout the compound, entering and exiting buildings at will.

After entering the Mission facility, the attackers used diesel fuel to set fire to the barracks/guard house of the Libyan 17<sup>th</sup> February Brigade militia, which served as a security force provided by the host nation for the Mission compound, and then proceeded towards the main buildings of the compound.<sup>6</sup> A Diplomatic Security (DS) agent working in the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) of the Mission

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<sup>4</sup> SSCI Transcript, *Hearing on the Attacks in Benghazi*, November 15, 2012, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, *Joint Statement for the Record, SSCI Hearing on the Attacks in Benghazi*, November 15, 2012, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

[REDACTED]

facility immediately activated the Imminent Danger Notification System.<sup>7</sup> He also alerted the CIA personnel stationed at the nearby CIA Annex (hereinafter “the Annex”), the Libyan 17<sup>th</sup> February Brigade, the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, and the Diplomatic Security Command Center (DSCC) in Washington, D.C.<sup>8</sup>

There were five DS agents at the Mission compound that night. Two had traveled from Tripoli with U.S. Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens (who was staying at the Mission compound in Benghazi), and three others were assigned to the Mission facility. In addition to the five DS agents on duty, there were three armed members of the Libyan 17<sup>th</sup> February Brigade militia, three Libyan National Police officers, and five unarmed members of a local security team contracted through a British company, Blue Mountain Group, who were guarding the Mission facility that night. In addition, six armed CIA security personnel (plus an interpreter) operating out of the nearby Annex were able to respond quickly after receiving word of the attack.

After the DS agent in the Tactical Operations Center at the Temporary Mission Facility alerted the Annex security team that the TMF was under attack at approximately 9:40 p.m., the Chief of Base called the [REDACTED], “who advised that he would immediately deploy a [REDACTED] force to provide assistance,” according to a September 19, 2012, cable that provided the joint CIA Station/Base report on the events surrounding the September 11-12 attacks.<sup>9</sup>

Two armored vehicles were prepared so the security team could respond from the Annex. Approximately 20-25 minutes after the first call came into the Annex that the Temporary Mission Facility was under attack, a security team left the Annex for the Mission compound. In footage taken from the Annex’s security cameras, the security team can be observed departing the CIA Annex at 10:03 p.m. Benghazi time. During the period between approximately 9:40 p.m. and 10:03 p.m. Benghazi time, the Chief of Base and security team members attempted to secure assistance and heavy weapons (such as .50 caliber truck-mounted machine guns) from the 17<sup>th</sup> February Brigade and other militias that had been assisting the United States.<sup>10</sup> Then, the team drove to the Mission facility and made their way

<sup>7</sup> NCTC and FBI, *The 11-12 September Attacks on US Facilities in Benghazi*, November 13, 2012, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> E-mail from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], “Fw: Subject: Eyes Only – Tripoli Station and Benghazi Base Report on Events of 11-12 September,” containing CIA TRIPOLI 27900, September 19, 2012, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Classified Report of the Department of State Accountability Review Board (ARB), December 18, 2012, p. 27.

onto the Mission compound in the face of enemy fire, arriving in the vicinity of the compound at approximately 10:10 p.m. Benghazi time.<sup>11</sup> The Committee explored claims that there was a “stand down” order given to the security team at the Annex. Although some members of the security team expressed frustration that they were unable to respond more quickly to the Mission compound,<sup>12</sup> the Committee found no evidence of intentional delay or obstruction by the Chief of Base or any other party.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, a DS agent secured Ambassador Stevens and State Department Information Management Officer Sean Smith in the “safe area” of the main building of the Mission facility (Building C). The attackers used diesel fuel to set the main building ablaze and thick smoke rapidly filled the entire structure. According to testimony of the Director of the NCTC, the DS agent began leading the Ambassador and Mr. Smith toward the emergency escape window to escape the smoke.<sup>14</sup> Nearing unconsciousness himself, the agent opened the emergency escape window and crawled out. He then realized he had become separated from the Ambassador and Sean Smith in the smoke, so he reentered and searched the building multiple times.<sup>15</sup> The DS agent, suffering from severe smoke inhalation, climbed a ladder to the roof where he radioed the other DS agents for assistance and attempted unsuccessfully to ventilate the building by breaking a skylight.<sup>16</sup>

Other DS agents went to retrieve their M-4 carbine assault rifles from Building B when the attack began. When they attempted to return to the main building (Building C) to help protect the Ambassador, they encountered armed attackers and decided to return to Building B to take cover rather than open fire. They eventually regrouped, made their way to a nearby armored vehicle, and then drove over to assist the agent on the roof of Building C searching for the

<sup>11</sup> NCTC and FBI, *The 11-12 September Attacks on US Facilities in Benghazi*, November 13, 2012, p. 4; E-mail from CIA Office of Congressional Affairs (OCA) staff to Staff Director, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), et al., “Background Points used on 1 Nov,” November 2, 2012, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> SSCI Memorandum for the Record, “Staff Briefing and Secure Video Teleconference (SVTC) with CIA Benghazi Survivors,” June 27, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> According to informal notes obtained from the CIA, the security team left for the Annex without the formal approval of the Chief of Base, see attachments to e-mail from CIA staff [REDACTED] to CIA staff [REDACTED], September 23, 2012. However, a Memorandum for the Record prepared by the Deputy Chief of Base specifically states that the Chief “authorized the move” and the Chief told the Committee: “We launched our QRF [Quick Reaction Force] as soon as possible down to the State [Department] compound.” [REDACTED], Memorandum for the Record, “Events of 11-12 SEP 2012 at Benghazi Base, Libya,” September 19, 2012, p. 1; and SSCI Transcript, *Member and Staff Interview of former Chief of Base*, December 20, 2012, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> SSCI Transcript, *Hearing on the Attacks in Benghazi*, November 15, 2012, pp. 27-29.

<sup>15</sup> NCTC and FBI, *The 11-12 September Attacks on US Facilities in Benghazi*, November 13, 2012, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Unclassified Report of the ARB, December 18, 2012, p. 22.