

The Benghazi Committee's Investigation: New Facts

- Despite President Obama and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's clear orders to deploy military assets, nothing was sent to Benghazi, and nothing was en route to Libya at the time the last two Americans were killed almost 8 hours after the attacks began. [pg. 141]
- With Ambassador Stevens missing, the White House convened a roughly two-hour meeting at 7:30 PM, which resulted in action items focused on a YouTube video, and others containing the phrases "[i]f any deployment is made," and "Libya must agree to any deployment," and "[w]ill not deploy until order comes to go to either Tripoli or Benghazi." [pg. 115]
- The Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff typically would have participated in the White House meeting, but did not attend because he went home to host a dinner party for foreign dignitaries. [pg. 107]
- A Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST) sat on a plane in Rota, Spain, for three hours, and changed in and out of their uniforms four times. [pg. 154]
- None of the relevant military forces met their required deployment timelines. [pg. 150]
- Five of the 10 action items from the 7:30 PM White House meeting referenced the video, but no direct link or solid evidence existed connecting the attacks in Benghazi and the video at the time the meeting took place. The State Department senior officials at the meeting had access to eyewitness accounts to the attack in real time. The Diplomatic Security Command Center was in direct contact with the Diplomatic Security Agents on the ground in Benghazi and sent out multiple updates about the situation, including a "Terrorism Event Notification." The State Department Watch Center had also notified Jake Sullivan and Cheryl Mills that it had set up a direct telephone line to Tripoli. There was no mention of the video from the agents on the ground. Greg Hicks—one of the last people to talk to Chris Stevens before he died—said there was virtually no discussion about the video in Libya leading up to the attacks. [pg. 28]
- The morning after the attacks, the National Security Council's Deputy Spokesperson sent an email to nearly two dozen people from the White House, Defense Department, State Department, and intelligence community, stating: "Both the President and Secretary Clinton released statements this morning. ... Please refer to those for any comments for the time being. To ensure we are all in sync on messaging for the rest of the day, Ben Rhodes will host a conference call for USG communicators on this chain at 9:15 ET today." [pg. 39]
- Minutes before the President delivered his speech in the Rose Garden, Jake Sullivan wrote in an email to Ben Rhodes and others: "There was not really much violence in Egypt. And we are not saying that the violence in Libya erupted 'over inflammatory videos.'" [pg. 44]
- According to Susan Rice, both Ben Rhodes and David Plouffe prepared her for her appearances on the Sunday morning talk shows following the attacks. Nobody from the FBI, Department of Defense, or CIA participated in her prep call. While Rhodes testified Plouffe would "normally" appear on the Sunday show prep calls, Rice testified she did not recall Plouffe being on prior calls and did not understand why he was on the call in this instance. [pg.98]
- On the Sunday shows, Susan Rice stated the FBI had "already begun looking at all sorts of evidence" and "FBI has a lead in this investigation." But on Monday, the Deputy Director, Office of Maghreb Affairs sent an email stating: "McDonough apparently told the SVTS [Secure Video Teleconference] group today that everyone was required to 'shut their pieholes' about the Benghazi attack in light of the FBI investigation, due to start tomorrow." [pg. 135]

- After Susan Rice's Sunday show appearances, Jake Sullivan assured the Secretary of the State that Rice "wasn't asked about whether we had any intel. But she did make clear our view that this started spontaneously and then evolved." [pg. 128]
- Susan Rice's comments on the Sunday talk shows were met with shock and disbelief by State Department employees in Washington. The Senior Libya Desk Officer, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, State Department, wrote: "I think Rice was off the reservation on this one." The Deputy Director, Office of Press and Public Diplomacy, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, State Department, responded: "Off the reservation on five networks!" The Senior Advisor for Strategic Communications, Bureau of Near East Affairs, State Department, wrote: "WH [White House] very worried about the politics. This was all their doing." [pg. 132]
- The CIA's September 13, 2012, intelligence assessment was rife with errors. On the first page, there is a single mention of "the early stages of the protest" buried in one of the bullet points. The article cited to support the mention of a protest in this instance was actually from September 4. In other words, the analysts used an article from a full week before the attacks to support the premise that a protest had occurred just prior to the attack on September 11. [pg. 47]
- A headline on the following page of the CIA's September 13 intelligence assessment stated "Extremists Capitalized on Benghazi Protests," but nothing in the actual text box supports that title. As it turns out, the title of the text box was supposed to be "Extremists Capitalized on Cairo Protests." That small but vital difference—from Cairo to Benghazi—had major implications in how people in the administration were able to message the attacks. [pg. 52]
- During deliberations within the State Department about whether and how to intervene in Libya in March 2011, Jake Sullivan listed the first goal as "avoid[ing] a failed state, particularly one in which al-Qaeda and other extremists might take safe haven." [pg. 9]
- The administration's policy of no boots on the ground shaped the type of military assistance provided to State Department personnel in Libya. The Executive Secretariats for both the Defense Department and State Department exchanged communications outlining the diplomatic capacity in which the Defense Department SST security team members would serve, which included wearing civilian clothes so as not to offend the Libyans. [pg. 60]
- When the State Department's presence in Benghazi was extended in December 2012, senior officials from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security were excluded from the discussion. [pg. 74]
- In February 2012, the lead Diplomatic Security Agent at Embassy Tripoli informed his counterpart in Benghazi that more DS agents would not be provided by decision makers, because "substantive reporting" was not Benghazi's purpose. [pg. 77]
- Emails indicate senior State Department officials, including Cheryl Mills, Jake Sullivan, and Huma Abedin were preparing for a trip by the Secretary of State to Libya in October 2012. According to testimony, Chris Stevens wanted to have a "deliverable" for the Secretary for her trip to Libya, and that "deliverable" would be making the Mission in Benghazi a permanent Consulate. [pg. 96]
- In August 2012—roughly a month before the Benghazi attacks—security on the ground worsened significantly. Ambassador Stevens initially planned to travel to Benghazi in early August, but cancelled the trip "primarily for Ramadan/security reasons." [pg. 99]
- Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta bluntly told the committee "an intelligence failure" occurred with respect to Benghazi. Former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell also acknowledged multiple times an intelligence failure did in fact occur prior to the Benghazi attacks. [pg. 129]