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RPTS JOHNSON

BENGHAZI BRIEFING

House of Representatives,

Committee on Armed Services,

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations,

Washington, D.C.

May, 21, 2013

(U) The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 3:23 p.m., in room 2337, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Martha Roby (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay. So we are ready to go. I do have one real quick follow-up question about the map that we were using in the other hearing, the other setting. And the question is was that map created after the fact?

(U) General Roberson. It was.

(U) Mrs. Roby. So I guess what I am trying to get at is how much did General Ham know -- I mean where the assets were without the benefit of it being laid out in this way?

(U) General Roberson. General Ham would have known where the assets for AFRICOM were, because they update that every day as well for AFRICOM.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay. But --

(U) General Roberson. Which they did.

(U) Mrs. Roby. But for planning purposes and decision time, decision-making time, this was not as a complete picture in front of those that were making the decision.

(U) General Roberson. General Ham would have used or immediately gone to those assets who were -- that were designated as Quick Response Forces.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay.

[REDACTED]

(U) Part of it has to do with the fact that AFRICOM really doesn't have a headquarters in Africa. They are in Stuttgart. You know, they are sharing a lot. And it makes sense. We don't -- in our opinion, it makes sense because if we had a base and a headquarters in AFRICOM we might have separate, you know, more separated kind of operations.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay.

(U)Ms. Tsongas. What is the one that is left there? Is it still up serving EUCOM?

(U) Mr. Reid. Bilat. More bilat. You know, more training with European partners. Building up European SOF and NATO SOF initiative is a big thing for us. Build more NATO SOF. And they have a big role in that.

(U) Mrs. Roby. So we will let you guys proceed with your testimony as if we were at the beginning of the hearing. But now we can do so with the top secret.

(U) General Roberson. TS level. Thank you, ma'am.

[REDACTED]

(U) General Roberson. East Coast time.

(U) Mr. Reid. Right? East Coast time. And again, that was in the timeline of -- public timeline we talked about, the Secretary gave the order. I believe, and I would have to look, I think they took off at about 5-plus. But again, it was a decision made about what are we configuring for?

[REDACTED]

(U) Let me see if I have anything else.

(U) General Roberson. You want me take over for a minute?

(U) Mr. Reid. That was the main points that I wanted to make.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. I have a question, and others may.

(U) General Roberson. Yes, ma'am.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay.

(U) General Roberson. So, again --

(U) Mrs. Roby. Because I am missing, I am missing, because we are talking about these as two, you know, the second attack at the annex didn't happen until 5:15, 5:16 a.m.

(U) General Roberson. That's right.

(U) Mrs. Roby. And from what we know about that attack, that it was very precise and seemed to be extremely calculated.

(U) General Roberson. Right.

(U) Mrs. Roby. I don't know, it just seems like there was a --

(U) Mr. Reid. We didn't consider the activity in Benghazi over until -- well, two things -- first of all, until we pulled everybody out of there. But I would say even that, this force continues today, and this intelligence workup and targeting process for those responsible.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Yes.

(U) General Roberson. And then a one-star admiral and then General Ham. Okay. So General Ham is the constant between the two separate chains.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) And so the fight broke out. There was a lot of confusion about what exactly was happening. They started to get reports. They knew there was a fire. They knew we were missing two people. That was being reported. We recovered one of them, but the ambassador was still missing.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Right.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Let's stick with Benghazi time.

(U) Ms. Tsongas. Yeah, it is easier.

(U) Mrs. Roby. It is easier if we stick with Benghazi time.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Eleven hours.

(U) Mrs. Roby. 5:15 a.m. is when the second attack happens.

(U) General Roberson. Right. That is when the second attack happens.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Lewis. I think you are talking past each other, ma'am. They knew nobody was in Benghazi anymore.

(U) Mrs. Roby. That is what I am just trying to make sure it is clear.

(U) Mr. Lewis. I know. I understand. You guys are talking past each other, though. What he is telling you is that they knew nobody was in Benghazi at the time, and that is why they didn't put any forces into Benghazi.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Can you be crystal clear when did that CIF start? Like when did they get in the air?

(U) General Roberson. The CIF was airborne, and I have that exact time -- again, I would have to convert it to Benghazi time.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Six hours, right? Six hours difference?

(U) General Roberson. Well, Zulu -- so there is three different times. Local here, Zulu, and then Eastern time in Libya.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. I believe it is 6 hours different. It is local plus six, Zulu

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

plus two.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. That is the problem.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. -- within days to do security there.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. Hour and a half.

(U) Ms. Tsongas. Hour and a half.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. In the middle of the night our time or --

(U) Mr. Reid. Overnight.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. During their time.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. This is the night --

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. No, no. That is not the night of the 11th.

(U) Mr. Reid. When the decision was made --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. -- annex or TMF, when that decision was made, which was overnight --

(U) Mrs. Roby. Was that --

(U) Mr. Reid. -- the night --

(U) Mrs. Roby. -- before the 5:15 attack or after?

(U) General Roberson. It was before.

(U) Mr. Reid. What I am looking at is it is before.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay. That is what I was --

(U) Mr. Reid. I think we are getting confused here, because I think to be fair, I think what was confusing --

(U) Mrs. Roby. Right. That is what I am trying to figure out, okay. This is my question. That decision to not go in before the 5:15 attack, I am asking the question why? Because we knew at that point -- your testimony has been that it

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

wasn't over.

(U) Mr. Reid. Right.

(U) Mrs. Roby. And why did we -- why was that decision made not to send those assets that were postured and ready to go and that could get there, why were they told no before the attack at 5:15?

(U) Mr. Reid. We had the -- at this time the Tripoli response team was on the ground in Benghazi at the airport. Okay.

(U) Ms. Tsongas. They arrive at 12:30.

(U) Mr. Reid. Right.

(U) Ms. Tsongas. So we are talking about the middle of the night transitioning from --

(U) General Roberson. Right. 12:30 a.m.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Six people.

(U) Mr. Reid. That team at the airport, seven.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Seven people.

(U) Mr. Reid. Seven people. Two DOD.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Five --

(U) Mr. Reid. Five others. They are at the airport.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Right.

(U) Mr. Reid. They are going -- we have already talked about what they were doing.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Right.

(U) Mr. Reid. They were trying to get to the annex. They are in communication by cell phone with the folks at the annex. Okay. There is a dialogue there. I am not -- I don't have a transcript. They had been attacked at

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the annex from firefight. They had repelled an attack. Okay. I believe, can't prove it, I believe they were already tracking on a decision to withdraw from that annex.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. I am saying they were in dialogue with each other. I don't have their transcript of their conversation.

(U) Mrs. Roby. I understand. I am not asking you for that.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. Correct.

(U) Mrs. Roby. That's what I am trying to --

(U) Mr. Reid. Correct.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. The other element is that that same team, both the airport and the annex, were also in contact with the militia. The militia that, you know, too late in some respects, showed up with I believe 27 vehicles to escort us over to the annex and out, that force is what they were organizing to go in there to do what they needed from a firepower.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay. Rob and then --

(U) Mr. Reid. But I would say from an interagency point of view, the best information that we are able to provide is what was provided in the presentation by Matt Olsen and the joint team that Darryl and I back benched with that video timeline account of the best information --

(U) Mrs. Roby. Sure.

(U) Mr. Reid. -- we have of that night.

(U) Mrs. Roby. And we get that. Again, I am just trying to get to the why, asking the question why certain decisions were made at the time that they were made. We have the benefit, you have used the terms, you know, 20/20, or I heard Monday morning quarterback I think somebody over there --

(U) Mr. Andrews. That was me.

[REDACTED]

(U) So I submit to you that set of thoughts is what led to a decision that look, it is not going to make a difference. Can't apply it. And we are working on this host nation force, which did ultimately provide the escort out of there. They got mortared, too, by the way.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Andrews. Slightly different question. Is it correct that at the time the attack was initiated, 8:42 p.m. or 9:42 or whatever it was Libyan time, there were seven Americans in the compound? Seven in the -- not the annex.

(U) Mr. Reid. The TMF?

(U) Mr. Andrews. Seven people. It was the ambassador, the information officer, and five security people. Is that right?

(U) General Roberson. I am sure I have got that somewhere.

(U) Mr. Reid. Going from memory here, I thought it was seven security. I may have that number somewhere.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Andrews. The precise number is not important.

(U) General Roberson. They were not DOD guys.

(U) Mr. Andrews. What was the normal staffing level at that consul office? Like on September 7th, how many Americans were inside the consul?

(U) General Roberson. Sir, I would respectfully have to say the State Department is the place to answer that.

(U) Mr. Reid. I have sat through Pat Kennedy's briefings, and I seem to recall that they did make him add a few more agents --

(U) General Roberson. They did.

(U) Mr. Reid. -- to go down there, but I don't recall precisely.

(U) Mr. Andrews. I am just wondering what the State Department was doing there on a normal day, since it didn't look like they had any personnel.

(U) Ms. Tsongas. Actually, I think a lot of the people that were there, two of them -- three of them came with the ambassador.

(U) Mr. Reid. The TMF, this post --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) General Roberson. It was a temporary mission facility.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) General Roberson. The annex was.

(U) Mr. Reid. Okay. The annex location, clearly CIA operation.

(U) Mr. Andrews. But the ambassador wasn't there very often apparently.

(U) Mr. Reid. Right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Andrews. Was there anybody else there when he wasn't?

(U) Mr. Reid. I don't have the details. I think they may have kept an agent there. Only going from memory as to --

(U) Mrs. Roby. That is all State Department.

(U) Mr. Reid. I know they said there was no classified storage there.

(U) Mr. Andrews. The only reason I ask is -- this is not a rhetorical question -- but what jumped out at me from the accountability board report is, you know, the shocking mismatch on the ground between the good guys and the bad guys. And you ask yourself the question, how could we do this? How could we put Americans in this situation with really no one there to protect them?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Again, having sat through briefings, I know the ambassador had an effort in place to strengthen and have a diplomatic presence. It wasn't full-time. And to that he lost his life. No pretense that this is a full on operation on the diplomatic side whatsoever.

(U) Mr. Andrews. Got it. Thank you, Madam Chair. That is what I wanted to know.

[REDACTED]

(U) General Roberson. I understand.

(U) Mr. Scott. But we have got basic things that we didn't even have the ability to communicate between the State Department and the DOD.

[REDACTED]

(U) So I just want to stress there are other -- I know four people died and they didn't -- four people didn't die in Tunis. But we had other roles for them as well.

(U) Mr. Scott. I have to go in about 4 minutes. Look, it is a tough situation. I mean it is a tough part of the world. I am just saying from my standpoint it would have made sense that they were up in the air. And the closer they were to the point that they might have needed to be at, the better it would have been.

(U) Mr. Reid. I appreciate that view, Congressman. And you are not the only one that's told me that. I have relatives that have told me that. So we are not blind to that. I know we sound very apologist here. But we only try to map out our thinking just to help you get in the mind-set of the situation.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. And we are appreciative of trying to understand the why. I don't know if there is anybody who does what you do -- nobody in here does what you do every day.

(U) General Roberson. And at the core, the only real thing that we can say is based on the circumstances and the situation and the information that we had, those were the decisions that were made by commanders to do this this way.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Questions?

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Yes. I do.

(U) Ms. Tsongas. At the same time, you are weighing what is happening in other parts of the world, are you not?

(U) General Roberson. Absolutely. Yes, ma'am.

(U) Ms. Tsongas. So it is not in isolation. You are trying to figure out --

(U) Mrs. Roby. Did you have other classified or top secret information that you wanted to give us? And then Jason has some -- Mr. Chaffetz has some questions.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. And we didn't cover that because we couldn't get the -- but we are going to do it. That piece is not --

(U) General Roberson. Yes.

(U) Mr. Reid. That was question one and two is I think what you are getting at.

(U) General Roberson. So generically, they had a mission and they were there for a reason.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. It got there in an hour.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. That is what I saw too. And it is 400 miles by the way. It couldn't have gotten there in an hour.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. Well, we did. We requested for --

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. We already had it --

(U) Mr. Reid. -- the aircraft.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. Yes.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. Medevac went into Benghazi.

(U) General Roberson. Libyan approval and presidential approval.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. No, it didn't.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) General Roberson. Confused.

(U) Mr. Reid. -- confused.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. It is what I tried to explain earlier, and I will try again.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Right.

(U) Mr. Reid. Now, when we cut that EXORD and General Ham went to the Ambassador, Cretz I think at the time, and said, hey, we are in here --

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. There was a change. There was a feud on this point.

(U) Mr. Reid. Yeah. And we say it all the time, you will hear McRaven say it all the time, you work for the ambassador. Okay, but it is a little more nuanced than that.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) General Roberson. That's correct.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. That's right. He didn't have authority.

(U) Mr. Reid. They respect the COM's authority. If it is an issue, we work it

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

out.

(U) General Roberson. Sir, for us the chief of mission is the senior American authority in the country.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. But we heard testimony from Gregory Hicks saying this was a big point of contention. When the crap was hitting the fan, we wanted to send those four guys, and they were told to stand down. I mean we heard the testimony. You have read the newspaper.

(U) Mr. Reid. What should have happened, if that all played out the way I saw it on TV, then Mr. Hicks should have picked up the phone and called Carter Ham and said, "I want -- I got to talk to you. This team needs to get on this plane. I need them there." That was the agreed upon process.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. I am not here to defend him. According to him, that was -- the liaison was Colonel Gibson. And that's where this quote that he used in the testimony, "I never thought I would see the day the State Department had bigger balls than the Department of Defense." Plane's getting ready to leave, and the convoy leaves, and these four guys are not on it. And I know that's another discussion. But it is a discussion we have to have. I don't want to get --

(U) Mr. Reid. The point is under authorities is we have a process for this. Okay.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. And they were not under Gregory Hicks' authority. They were under --

(U) Mr. Reid. They were under title 10 authority.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. They were under General Ham's.

(U) Mr. Reid. Command and control.

(U) General Roberson. That's correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. Again, C-2 is different than -- the problem is the State Department doesn't have the term OPCON. Okay, we have this in the military. You use my force, but I give them to you, you tell them what to do within certain parameters.

(U) General Roberson. Operational control.

(U) Mr. Reid. We don't have that with Department of State. So we have these agreements that we coordinate. When we do these orders, when we go to deputies with an EXORD and it says --

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. It sounds good until they are in conflict.

(U) Mr. Reid. Well, but it works too. You just got to work the process.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Yeah. One other quick thing. You said Ambassador Stevens declined more Department of Defense assets. I mean this is one thing we are trying to sort out.

(U) Mr. Reid. He declined continuing SST is what I said.

(U) General Roberson. Yeah.

(U) Mr. Reid. General Ham offered to sustain the SST, and the ambassador said, I don't need the SST any more.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. The chairman is here and Mike Turner. We are going to revisit this issue. We did not have everybody lined up today that we needed to. We will make sure that you are there.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Can I ask one more thing?

(U) Mrs. Roby. I am going to have to defer to the chairman.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Absolutely.

(U) Mrs. Roby. And then Mike, if you have any questions. And then I will circle back to you.

(U) The Chairman. I don't. I apologize for not being here more, but I don't have any questions.

(U) Mr. Turner. I had some questions, but I don't want to jump in at this late in the game. So go ahead and proceed. Not having heard what's gone on before --

(U) Mrs. Roby. We are really about to wrap up.

(U) Mr. Turner. That's fine.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Can I ask one more question?

(U) Mrs. Roby. I was going to come back to you.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Thank you.

(U) Mrs. Roby. I was trying to make sure that --

(U) Mr. Turner. Thank you for doing that.

(U) Mrs. Roby. I had to make sure I followed protocol. All right. Go ahead, Jason.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Or is there an opinion as to, well, look, that's State Department's call, but there is no reason that that should have slowed down? I mean I don't want State Department coming back saying, well, the reason we didn't is because, well, these guys were coming in.

(U) General Roberson. And I don't think State Department would tell you that. What I can tell you is that the FEST has DOD representatives that are on it.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Yeah.

(U) General Roberson. The FEST is under the control of the State Department.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. Right.

[REDACTED]

■

[REDACTED]

■

(U) Mr. Reid. No, we did not. Absolutely.

(U) Mr. Turner. I do have a question.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) The Chairman. I have one quick. Go ahead.

[REDACTED]





[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Turner. Let me just say something. I am sorry, I haven't participated in that hearing. I have just got to say this before I go. The absolute emotional frustration of the three people who testified, having been there and feeling abandoned by their country, it just seems amazing to me that this was a war zone, where DOD was created in war -- you know, we went after Qadhafi, and then with this ongoing mission that was on the ground, I don't understand how the answer could be, one, that there wasn't anything else available.

(U) How could that have been the post-Qadhafi plan that we just send Americans and put them on the ground and don't have any assets to back up? And then two, I still don't understand how DOD and State Department work when there is a crisis. So I am on both.

(U) General Roberson. Yes, sir. And I don't remember, pardon me, in the last hearing, but you know, State Department has primary responsibility for security for State Department issues. DOD does not.

(U) Mr. Turner. Wait a minute. It was a war zone. I mean this is not like, you know, what is happening in Austria or some other place. This is like, you know, you went in and took out Qadhafi. This is a war zone. I mean this is months after a war zone. It just seems as if there would have been greater assets that would have been --

(U) Mr. Reid. Certainly --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Turner. -- tasked with post-war zone.

(U) Mr. Reid. Although one month before this attack the last element of DOD that was there for the specific purpose of providing security was dismissed by the ambassador, against the recommendation of the combatant commander. I mean a tragic outcome, but the war presence, such that it would have been, although we never really had boots on the ground -- I take the point, Congressman, that you can imagine now that it would have been a lot better to have aircraft on a shorter alert.

(U) But in terms of what we had in that country, the transition was made a month prior by the ambassador that the DOD footprint was reduced and was replaced by Diplomatic Security. And with your question on the being at the table, and the Secretary briefed this in his hearing in February, there were interagency meetings that night with deputies and principals to pull together the interagency response, which is where, from the initial meeting with Secretary Panetta and the President, upon first notice, there was a follow on meeting at the deputies level to coordinate these elements. And this is where we worked these things out.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) And again, keep in mind they are telling Secretary Clinton the whole way, we are going to get control, we are going to get control. Our forces moving were really a hedge for that. They weren't even intended to be the primary provider at the time they were moving.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Again, you don't know what's going to happen in the future, and you are getting forces in position. But there clearly is a dialogue. And there are other parallel discussions with respect to restoring security in a diplomatic mission.

[REDACTED]

(U) The Chairman. What is lower?

[REDACTED]

(U) The Chairman. But no pilots sitting in planes ready to go.

(U) General Roberson. No, sir.

(U) The Chairman. So just an awareness alert.

(U) General Roberson. It is a force protection condition. So it is a

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

response.

(U) The Chairman. No forces were moved anywhere, no forces were moved closer to Libya.

(U) General Roberson. No, sir.

(U) The Chairman. Not any of that. Were either of you in any of these rooms where this was being discussed on the day of the attack?

(U) General Roberson. I was not.

(U) Mr. Reid. I was not.

(U) The Chairman. So where did you get your direction that you are briefing us?

(U) General Roberson. I was picked by --

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. What did you do wrong?

(U) General Roberson. -- by the DOD Joint Staff to be the representative, and was part of the original team that was stood up, Joint Benghazi Task Force, if you will, in DOD.

(U) The Chairman. After the event?

(U) General Roberson. After the event, and put together a Benghazi --

(U) Mr. Reid. They set up a Benghazi task force.

(U) General Roberson. -- task force. And I was one of the guys that was on that.

(U) The Chairman. Let's go back to 9/11, the day of the attack. It seems to me there was a State Department failure when they released those troops 30 days before, those security forces that was there. I think that was a mistake. Somebody else will make that decision. And then the date of the attack, what I am trying to do is figure out where the military function came in here and what can we

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

do to prevent future problems like this. I don't think you ever totally, you know, prevent everything. The enemy gets a vote too. But say on that day where was Secretary Panetta?

(U) Mr. Reid. In the Pentagon.

(U) General Roberson. In the Pentagon.

(U) The Chairman. In the Pentagon doing his normal work --

(U) General Roberson. Yes, sir.

(U) The Chairman. -- as General Dempsey was.

(U) General Roberson. And the chairman was.

(U) The Chairman. And they heard of the attack while they were at their desk or wherever they were.

(U) General Roberson. Yes, sir.

(U) The Chairman. Did they then go to the White House or were they actually --

(U) General Roberson. Yes.

(U) The Chairman. That was a prescheduled meeting at the White House?

(U) General Roberson. Yes, sir. That's right.

(U) The Chairman. So they didn't go over there just to talk about this attack.

(U) General Roberson. Right.

(U) The Chairman. When did they get to the White House?

(U) General Roberson. It was 5 p.m.

(U) The Chairman. And what time was the attack?

(U) General Roberson. It was 5 p.m. Eastern time. It was 3:42 local time.

(U) The Chairman. So the first fight was over?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. Yes.

(U) General Roberson. Yes.

(U) The Chairman. When did Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey hear about it?

(U) General Roberson. They heard about it -- I don't know the exact time, but it was within minutes. It was less than an hour after the event first occurred.

(U) The Chairman. First attack was only an hour?

(U) General Roberson. Less than an hour is when it came through all of the channels.

(U) The Chairman. But the attack itself on the compound --

(U) General Roberson. Yes, sir.

(U) The Chairman. -- was less than an hour?

(U) General Roberson. Was less than an hour.

(U) The Chairman. The ambassador was probably already dead?

(U) General Roberson. Probably, based on what we know now.

(U) The Chairman. By the time the President heard about it. Assuming he didn't hear about it before he heard from Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey.

(U) General Roberson. Don't know anything about that, sir.

(U) Mr. Chaffetz. We didn't know that he was dead, though.

(U) General Roberson. We didn't.

(U) The Chairman. I understand. I understand that. But --

(U) General Roberson. Obviously, he knew by 5, because they were meeting about it.

(U) The Chairman. That's when he found out.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) General Roberson. No, I don't know when he found out. I can't --

(U) The Chairman. He knew at 5 or before.

(U) General Roberson. He knew for sure at 5, because that's when he was meeting with the Secretary of Defense and the chairman.

(U) The Chairman. Do you know of any direction or any orders he gave to them?

(U) General Roberson. Yes. He told them to do everything we can to help the situation.

(U) The Chairman. That's it?

(U) General Roberson. That's really all we need.

(U) The Chairman. That's all you need.

(U) General Roberson. To move out.

(U) The Chairman. To do everything you can.

(U) General Roberson. That's right. We came back and we had an assessment of all the forces that could potentially be a factor in this, and we ordered them, you know, to move forward. Now, it took about --

(U) The Chairman. But nobody did.

(U) General Roberson. Yes, sir. I hate to say it, but they did. There was a lot of movement going on. The first things were happening purely by VOCO. We were picking up telephones, telling the organizations, hey, this is coming your way. You know, get ready. And they did. They started preparing right away. And then it took a little bit of time to get the Secretary of Defense's vocal order, VOCO, to approve all of this. You know, and it was -- there was -- you know, once the President said go forth and conquer, there was not much else that we need other than the Sec Def saying yep.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) The Chairman. When were those orders rescinded?

(U) General Roberson. They were not rescinded.

(U) The Chairman. Not. So to this day, though, we have not taken any action to get those who did this.

(U) Mr. Reid. On the DOD side we have not conducted any direct action.

We have --

(U) General Roberson. Done a lot.

[REDACTED]

(U) The Chairman. Based on everything that's happened at this point, do you think we will take action at all at some point?

(U) General Roberson. I do. Yes, sir.

(U) The Chairman. We will get the guys that did it?

(U) Mr. Reid. Our history has been, Chairman, even if it takes a long time, we get it out. We rolled up in Baghdad, when we went in there in 2003, I forget his name now, he died, he was one of the Achille Lauro guys. We had been after him

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. You had a question?

(U) Mr. Lamborn. Yeah, I have a question.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Were you finished, Chairman?

(U) The Chairman. Yeah.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Lamborn. Which force was that again?

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Lamborn. Oh, an indigenous force.

(U) Mr. Reid. Yes, sir. The Libyan militia that was part of the force that transported to the airport.

(U) Mr. Lamborn. Okay. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

(U) Ms. Tsongas. Just to say thank you so much for your testimony. A lot of very important questions to ask and be answered. And one of the things I have come to appreciate as I have been listening to you is how constrained we were as a result of our -- thinking post-Libya, post-effort to overthrow the Qadhafi government, in which we never did put troops on the ground, that that whole relationship with the Libyan Government going forward was very constrained by that and our own decision to be very thoughtful about it.

(U) So as this unfolded in Benghazi, you really had two things you could do. You had to bring in airplanes from outside and you had to bring in people from outside. And I for one think you all -- maybe not what you have been hearing at this table, but thought -- I see how difficult it was, the analysis that went into it, how quickly it was unfolding on the ground in Benghazi, the time constraints that you had just readying the various response elements, but nevertheless moved ahead aggressively until it was clear that it was over and we were all making our -- our people were making their way back to the airport.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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(U) Ms. Tsongas. So I look to Secretary Gates, who said had he been in the same decision-making place he probably would have made the same decisions that were inevitably made. Unfortunately, four Americans' lives were lost, and that's what troubles everybody here and why we are so concerned. Not just the decisions made that day, but going forward how we will -- we will never be able to get it all, but how we potentially avert future loss of life when we have people stationed in very dangerous locations and seeking to represent our country through the State Department. It is different, you know, it is a very different approach to representing a country. And that's what DOD does.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(U) Mrs. Roby. Okay. We are going to try to wrap up.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Lamborn. All right. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

(U) And by the way, the people there, those men that were there at FAST, you know, those guys were impressive. They made us proud. They are good.

[REDACTED]

(U) Mr. Reid. We haven't talked about the highest threat embassy posts here today, Sana'a, Aden, Peshawar, the diplomatic facilities in Iraq -- not Baghdad; it is pretty well -- there are some vulnerabilities. My point is with respect to your point, ma'am, about air and ground, the reality is you never get rid of the risk. You can mitigate it to some extent, but really all we do is move the risk around. If you do all air, you have got no boots on the ground. If you do too many people on the ground, you've got people rallying against you. This equation, there will always be risk.

[REDACTED]

(U) We are coming back tomorrow for a House leadership briefing to talk and lay all of this down to the leadership of what we are doing. The State Department will be here, the General will be here, and Pat Kennedy with the House leadership tomorrow. So make sure that we are all in partner here that the difficulties and challenges that we are dealing with.

(U) Mrs. Roby. Anything else? Gentlemen, thank you. It's been a long afternoon, and I appreciate your sticking with us and answering our questions.

(U) [Whereupon, at 4:53 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[REDACTED]