



## BENGHAZI

This is a summary of the investigation of the Benghazi attack and death of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and others. The unclassified version of the report is 39 pages long. I have tried to extract the key areas without slanting it. I have not showed precisely when I quoted and when I left something out.

### MY OWN SUMMARY

Benghazi was an informal outpost which did not have the source of funds available to permanent State Department locations. It did not meet State Department security standards. It was under-staffed and those who where there cycled in and out quickly. Language capacity and local support were lacking.

There was no demonstration in Benghazi on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Until 9:45 pm that day, all was quiet. The portion of the attack which killed Ambassador Stevens took about 30 minutes. His death resulted from smoke from the fire, started with fuel the attackers found on the site, after they had broken in. A second attack that night killed others, including by 3 mortar rounds which hit the roof of an adjacent building in the compound. The survivors escaped in an armored car, which itself was attacked. They were out of the country within 24 hours, receiving treatment in Germany.

The compound had surveillance cameras which did not work and some which were not installed. It had no effective fire suppression equipment. But the real question seems to be whether any Americans should have been there at all. The initial attack took only 30 minutes to be fatal.

Assuming the report is correct, any reports of demonstrations earlier in the day were ungrounded.

### INTRODUCTION

For many years the State Department has been engaged in a struggle to obtain the resources necessary to carry out its work. Congress must do its part to meet this challenge and provide necessary recourses to the State Department to address security risks and meet mission imperatives. [The Introduction also criticizes the State Department, but the basis for that criticism shows up only at the end of the report.]

### FINDINGS

1. The attacks were security related, involving RPG's grenades, and mortars. There was no protest prior to the attacks, which were unanticipated in their scale and intensity.
2. Systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels resulted in a Special Mission security posture that was inadequate for Benghazi and grossly inadequate to deal with the attack that took place. There were stove-piped discussions and decisions on policy and security. Embassy Tripoli did not demonstrate strong and sustained advocacy with Washington for increased security for Special Mission Benghazi. Relatively inexperienced American personnel often on temporary

assignments of 40 days or less resulted in diminished institutional knowledge, continuity and mission capacity.

Security staff in Benghazi was inadequate, despite repeated requests from Special Mission Benghazi and Embassy Tripoli for additional staffing. The Special Mission was not a high priority for Washington.

Special Mission Benghazi's "non-status" as a temporary, residential facility made allocation of resources for security and personnel more difficult, and left responsibility to meet security standards to the working-level in the field.

At the time of Ambassador Steven's visit, militia members had stopped accompanying Special Mission vehicle movements in protest over salary and working hours. [Who paid these people? Apparently, the US.]

They were aware of the 9-11 anniversary but there were no specific, credible threats and Stevens had taken the anniversary into account, so had all meetings on-compound on September 11.

Stevens made the decision to travel to Benghazi independently of Washington, per standard practice. The trip timing was due in part to a staffing gap. Stevens' plans were not shared with the Embassy's country team. Steven's status as leading US government advocate on Libya caused Washington to give him unusual deference.

Every possible effort was made to rescue and recover Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith. The interagency response was timely and appropriate, but there simply was not enough time for armed US military assets to have made a difference.

#### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen security beyond host government security. Balance risk and costs.
2. Reexamine security policy planning.
5. Develop minimum security standards and seek greater flexibility in use of Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) sources of funding for security.
8. Consider use of fire as a weapon against diplomatic facilities.
10. Work with Congress to restore Capital Security Cost Sharing Program at its full capacity, \$2.2 billion.
11. The Board supports the State Department's initiative to request additional Marines as well as requirements for staffing and funding.
12. Obtain additional Mobile Security Deployment Teams.
13. Lengthen the temporary duty length to at least 120 days.
14. Hire more interpreters.
15. Upgrade language capacity and get greater resources to do so.
18. Train fire safety and develop safe havens.
20. Upgrade surveillance cameras.
21. Pay less attention to specific threats and more to "deteriorating threat situation in general."

#### CONTEXT

As historical background, in 1967, the US Consulate in Benghazi was overrun by a mob and burned.

When Ambassador Stevens arrived on April 5, 2012, he operated from the Tibesti Hotel, accompanied by 10 Diplomatic Security agents. On June 1, 2011, a car bomb exploded outside the hotel and Stevens moved to the Annex. Generally, public attitudes in Benghazi were positive toward Americans. There follows a list of 20 incidents in Benghazi beginning March 18, 2012 in which foreigners were affected by misdeeds (a robbery for instance) and violence. No deaths are mentioned and only a few injuries, but RPGs and bombs were involved 7 times.

TIMELINE [The full account is particularly interesting, even exciting to read.]

Ambassador Stevens arrived in Benghazi on September 10. It was his first visit to Benghazi. 7 Americans were at the compound. Stevens met that evening with the City Council in a local hotel for dinner. He had tried to keep the program secret, but the press arrived.

At 6:45 am on September 11<sup>th</sup>, someone was seen taking pictures of the Special Mission Complex (SMC) from across the street. At 7:40 pm, Stevens escorted a Turkish diplomat out of the SMC and nothing out of the ordinary was noted. Between 8:10 and 8:30 pm, Brits dropped off vehicles and equipment. Again, nothing out of the ordinary. At 9:42 pm, a police car left its place in front of the mission. About the same time, shots and an explosion were heard. Armed men began to come through the main gate. Stevens began to call Tripoli for help. Between 9:45 and 10pm, the armed men used fuel cans they found on the premises to burn one of the buildings. The next events bear reading but do not have to do with the security of the SMC, only with the efforts to escape. Stevens moved to a safer portion of the compound, but he and others were quickly overcome by smoke. He was last on the phone at 9:50pm. His security aids lost him and could not relocate him in time to save him. Other agents came to support the SMC at 11:05 pm. The report does not pinpoint when Stevens died, but it appears to have been not later than 30 minutes after the initial assault.

There was a second attack on the Annex, which began just before midnight. It included RPG's and lasted for an hour. Support came from Tripoli at 5am. By 5:15am there was another attack with mortars and RPG. 5 mortar rounds hit the Annex within 90 seconds. 3 hit the roof killing several Americans. At 6:30 am, all US personnel had been evacuated. They left Benghazi by 7:30 am. At 7:15 pm that night, everyone was on two air force planes sent in from Germany. They arrived at Ramstein at 10:30 pm and received life saving medical attention.

I have left out details about movements of individual people under attack and the various efforts made (very quickly) to get support from drones, military, local police, etc.

#### MORE DETAILED FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

2. There was a general lack of planning and organization in Washington which led to Benghazi being too risky. Benghazi should have been shut down well before 9-11. It was not clear who was responsible for making this decision. [I suspect this was in part due to deference given to Stevens – an acknowledged expert on Arab affairs.] Tripoli had its own security concerns, so Benghazi got less attention. Benghazi was a temporary facility and not officially notified to the host government. Therefore, it was exempt from official US security standards. It was not eligible for certain funds to provide security. Staffing was transitory and insufficient. There was a lack of local staff. [Here we begin to get criticism of the State Department.] People stationed in Benghazi gave up asking for more security. The agents sent there did

not get adequate “high threat” training. They were often volunteers without language skills. There was misplaced reliance on the local militia for security.

The facility itself had inadequate security. Because it was “temporary” it could not get official funds so it found “non-traditional funding streams.” Security was patchwork.

3. The Benghazi facility had additional surveillance cameras, which would have provided more warning, but they were not installed. Another camera was broken. The staff had no non-lethal crowd control capability and no fire safety equipment. The driving capability of staff and armored cars saved lives. First aid capacity did, too. The US logistics and coordination generally worked very well. The people we had on the ground in Benghazi and Tripoli reacted superbly. But the attack occurred so quickly that no military assets would have made a difference. The quick evacuation from Libya and resulting medical care saved lives. Communications worked.

4. Too much emphasis was put on specific threats and not on general trends. Benghazi and the risks it faced were not a subject of much discussion at the State Department. Americans did not understand the militia structure in Libya and could not rely on them for security.

In sum – The US should not have been in Benghazi at all. Once there, the compound was a sitting duck. It is unlikely (although possible) that a larger, local security staff could have fought off the attackers and once the fire started, Ambassador Stevens death quickly followed. Having an aircraft carrier or larger support staff in Tripoli would not have made any difference. We should not have relied on the local militia. Our staff should have been better trained and better suited to the mission. Initial reports (Susan Rice) that there had been demonstrations during the day were false.

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