



May 28, 2014

Representative Trey Gowdy
1404 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Gowdy,

We applaud the recent decision by House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) to form a bi-partisan Select Committee to thoroughly investigate the Benghazi attacks of 2012 and the subsequent Obama administration cover-up of this unprecedented incident, which took four American lives. Your selection as Chair of this special Select Committee is also great news, and we appreciate your willingness to serve in this capacity. You have demonstrated that you are a serious and tough questioner and relentless when pursuing the truth. At least now there is a strong possibility of bringing some closure to the families of our dead Americans and holding those who were involved accountable for their actions and inactions.

As veterans from all aspects of Special Operations, we are committed to uncovering the truth about what happened in Benghazi. This is why we write to you with our concerns and advice on the best way to proceed with the Committee's investigation.

While the Committee will be compelled to dig deeply into the changed talking points memo and the denial of requests for additional security in Benghazi, the greater focus must be on a more important question: why was there no military response? It is obvious that there is a cover-up, and it seems almost definite that it was the result of myriad political considerations. But the issue of the lack of a military response is the one that has the greatest long-term impact on our nation. That issue uniquely brings into question our character. When we as a nation put our people in harm's way, we must do so with the clear knowledge that we have done our very best to provide the support essential to their survival when the chips are down. This is an American value. That essential trust and confidence was breached in Benghazi and broadcast a very dangerous message to future diplomats, warriors, and citizens.

Benghazi represents a low point in American history, one that will embolden all our enemies for decades to come.

As you know, Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) has championed the cause of a bi-partisan select committee for over a year. He offered H.Res. 36 in January 2013 and actively pursued co-sponsors, eventually obtaining 191 fellow Republicans' signatures. As this senior legislator prepares for his departure from the seat that he has held for thirty-three years in Virginia's 10th

Congressional District, he leaves the U.S. Congress with the satisfaction of knowing that one of his most significant accomplishments may be to bring closure to the Benghazi affair.

In order for this Committee to achieve success in revealing the facts and assigning responsibility, there must be a well-developed plan that includes a list of people who will be called to testify and the questions that will be asked. Otherwise, this will be just another investigation and will result in very little new information. However, we are confident that you will not allow that to be the outcome, since your advocacy for truth has been proven in numerous hearings. Calling the right people to testify and asking the questions that have not been asked to date is critical to the outcome of the hearing.

First, we ask you to begin with the survivors. There are over thirty Americans who were on the ground in Benghazi the night of the attacks, yet none have been called to testify previously.

Next, the list of witnesses should include the names culled from the combatant commands' records of plans and orders implemented before, during, and after the massacre at Benghazi. That list will consist of analysts, action officers, and decision-makers with first-hand knowledge of how and why fateful decisions were made both in deliberate and crisis-action activities within both the US European Command (US-EUCOM) and the US Africa Command (USAFRICOM).

Third, because each combatant command has a political advisor (POLAD) (the Department of State representative to the command), the AFRICOM POLAD should be called to testify. Since AFRICOM and the European Command (EUCOM) are both in Stuttgart, Germany, the EUCOM POLAD should also be included among those who testify. It is critically important to know what guidance these individuals were receiving from the Department of State on the night of the attacks.

Fourth, an array of military leaders needs to be brought before the Committee. Vice Admiral Leidig, who was the Deputy Commander of AFRICOM in Stuttgart, Germany, on the night of the attacks should be the first to testify. Leidig was in the Joint Operations Center for AFRICOM on September 12th, 2012, because General Carter Ham, the AFRICOM Commander, was in Washington, D.C., on business and fortuitously was located in the National Military Command Center in the Pentagon that night. Essentially, Leidig was directing the operations responding to the crisis in Libya. His testimony will be critical to understanding what instructions were issued to AFRICOM from the White House, the Department of Defense, and the Department of State regarding what AFRICOM was instructed to do and what restrictions were placed on the command that limited, prevented, or interrupted a military response.

Finally, other military personnel should be brought before the Committee for testimony. Multiple media outlets have reported that two Special Operations personnel recently received awards for valor due to their actions at the CIA annex. They should be called to testify as well. Also summoned should be commanders from the Commander-in-Chief's in Extremis Forces (CIF) in the European theater. Their mission is to respond to events like Benghazi. Navy SEALs, Army Special Forces, and Air Force Special Operations elements constitute the CIF and were placed in the various theaters in order to give Military Unified Commands an internal capability to conduct rescue and other counterterrorist operations. Likewise, the commanders of various USMC elements that were in the Mediterranean region on September 11, 2012, should be summoned to explain what instructions they received during the attacks.

Once the right people have been called to testify, then the right questions must be asked regarding the lack of military responsiveness. Below is a list of questions that the Committee should pose to those individuals who are brought before the Committee:

- Why was there no military response to the events in Benghazi?
- Were military assets in the region available? If not, why not? If so, were they alerted?
- Were assets deployed to any location in anticipation of a possible rescue or recovery requirement?
- Was military assistance requested by the Department of State? If so, what type and by whom? If not, why not?
- Were any military assets available to support the U.S. Ambassador and other personnel on the ground in Benghazi during the attack?
- What, if any, recommendations for military action were made by AFRICOM?
- What guidance did the POLADS from AFRICOM and EUCOM receive from DOS during the attacks?
- What, if any, non-military/interagency assistance was provided during the attack?
- Were any requests for assistance ever considered or made by the National Command Authorities (NCA) to our Allies (United Kingdom and/or Italy) who had forces in the Mediterranean region?
- How many U.S. personnel were injured in Benghazi?
- Who was in the White House Situation Room (WHSR) during the entire 8-hour period of the attacks, and specifically were any senior military officers present throughout the attacks?
- Where were former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and General Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the crisis, and what inputs and recommendations did they make?
- Where were Tom Donilon, the National Security Advisor, Denis McDonough, his deputy, Valerie Jarrett, and John Brennan during the attacks, and what (if any) recommendations or decisions did any of them make?
- What was the rationale behind and who made the decision to intentionally NOT *alert* or *deploy* the Foreign Emergency Support Team (FEST) whose sole purpose

and assigned mission was to respond on short notice to terrorist incidents worldwide?

- Were F-16 fighter aircraft based in Aviano, Italy (less than two hours away) or U.S. Navy aircraft in Sigonella, Italy, ever considered for disruption (if not dispersal) of the attackers until “boots on the ground” (troop support--General Dempsey’s words) arrived?
- Were any strike aircraft (such as an AC-130 gunship) in the area or possibly overhead that could have supported the defense of the annex?
- Were any MC-130 Combat Talon special operations aircraft in Croatia conducting Counterterrorism (CT) training during Exercise Jackal Stone with the CIF that night and more specifically, were they alerted for a possible CIF insertion mission in Benghazi or specifically told to STAND DOWN?
- Was there an order (or multiple orders) issued to STAND DOWN, and if so, WHO gave those orders and WHY?
- Did the CIA Chief of base (COB), who was located in the Annex in Benghazi, repeatedly delay Tyrone Woods and his team from immediately deploying to the “Special Mission Compound” to come to the aid of Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith?
- What was the true purpose of the “Special Mission Compound” (SMC)? There is no formal recognition in the State Department of a SMC, and this facility was clearly not a Consulate.
- What threat warnings and indications existed before the attack, and what were the DOD and DOS responses to those warnings and indications?
- What data (which will reveal exact timelines and command decisions) is contained within the various situation reports (SITREPS), records, logs, videos, and recordings maintained by the myriad DOD, Intelligence Community and State Department Command Centers that were monitoring the events in Benghazi as they unfolded?
- What was the nature of Ambassador Stevens’ business in Benghazi at the time of the attack?
- What guidance has been provided to survivors and family members since the time of the attack, and who issued that guidance?
- Are agencies that were involved in Benghazi now requiring their personnel having knowledge of the events in Benghazi to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements?

Each of these questions (and others that are sure to emerge as a result) must be satisfactorily and truthfully answered by all persons at all levels who had the responsibility to advise the President and the Secretary of Defense during this shameful national tragedy.

Again, we thank you for your willingness to serve the American people as Chair of the Select Committee on Benghazi. Your ability to ask hard questions about the security situation on the ground in Benghazi will help produce the answers still needed to better understand what unfolded in September 2012. Ultimately, our hope is that such answers will help improve our foreign policy and protect American lives in the future.

Sincerely,



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