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March 26, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Committee on Foreign Affairs is continuing to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding the deadly September 11-12, 2012 terrorist attacks in Benghazi, Libya. Part of this oversight includes an examination of the security posture at the Special Mission Compound (SMC) and whether it was appropriately staffed. According to the Accountability Review Board's December 2012 report, the Department deployed relatively junior Diplomatic Security (DS) agents on short-term assignment to this high threat post.¹ I am concerned about the decision-making process that resulted in the use of such temporary duty (TDY) personnel at the SMC.

The Department's reliance upon TDY personnel appears to have contributed to the SMC's insufficient security posture. Indeed, in its report, the Benghazi Accountability Review Board underscored the "short-term, transitory nature" of the SMC's staffing as one of the "primary drivers" behind the "inadequate security platform in Benghazi."² As the former DS overseas security chief, Charlene Lamb, observed prior to the attack: "We are not staffed or resourced adequately to protect our people in that type of environment. We are a soft target against the resources available to the bad guys there. Not to mention there is no continuity because we do everything there with TDY personnel."³

¹ Department of State, *Accountability Review Board for Benghazi*, December 18, 2013, available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ Email from Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security Charlene Lamb to Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security Scott Bultrowicz, with carbon copies to Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security Eric Boswell and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Countermeasures Gentry Smith, June 11, 2012, 4:16 p.m.

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Although it praised the conduct of these “junior” DS agents, the Board noted, “given the threat environment and with very little operational oversight from more experienced, senior colleagues, combined with an under-resourced security platform, these agents were not well served by their leadership in Washington.”⁴ In view of these findings, the Board recommended that the Department assign key security personnel at high risk, high threat posts for at least one year tours of duty.⁵

To support the Committee’s oversight, I ask that the Department please provide the following additional information with respect to each DS agent present at the SMC during the attacks **no later than 5:00 p.m. on April 11, 2014**. At the time of his assignment to Libya:

1. What was his personal rank or grade?
2. How long had he served as a DS agent?
3. What were his previous post or office assignments and how long did he serve at each?
4. What training had he received from DS or other organizations to prepare him for assignment to a high-threat post?
5. Were there other aspects about his background, experience, or training that might bear on his suitability for a high-threat post (e.g., specialized military service)?
6. Did the Department consider other candidates with more experience prior to selecting these agents? If not, why? If so, why were they not assigned to serve at the SMC?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If your staff has any questions about this request, they may contact Chief Counsel for Oversight and Investigations Thomas Alexander at 202-225-5021.

Sincerely,



EDWARD R. ROYCE
Chairman

⁴ Department of State, *Accountability Review Board for Benghazi*, December 18, 2013, available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/202446.pdf>.

⁵ *Id.*