

APR - 1 2013



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAR 29 2013

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Accountability Review Board's (ARB) review of the circumstances surrounding the September 11 attack on the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi. For everyone at the State Department, where we lost cherished friends and colleagues on that tragic day, we share your commitment to understanding and learning from the attack.

As you know, Secretary Clinton convened the ARB to conduct a thorough, candid, and independent examination of the attacks. Chairman Ambassador Thomas Pickering and Vice Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen, two distinguished public servants with impeccable credentials who have served Presidents both Republican and Democratic, briefed the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees on the Board's review, findings and recommendations, and noted publicly that throughout its investigation, the ARB received superb cooperation from the Department and its interagency partners.

We have provided your Committee with access to the unclassified and classified versions of the ARB's report, the latter of which is an extensive document that includes more than 70 pages of findings and recommendations, as well as an annex of key documents reviewed by the ARB, comprising nearly 130 pages. Included in the classified version is a list of individuals interviewed by the ARB. Secretary Clinton made clear from the outset that regardless of the ARB's findings, we would make them public because the men and women of the State Department, the Congress, and the American people deserve to know what happened in Benghazi. Only one ARB report of the 18 prior has been made available to the public.

The Honorable

Darrell Issa, Chairman,

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,
House of Representatives.

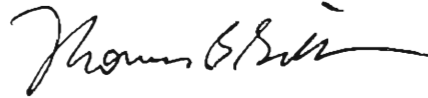
The Department is fully committed to implementing the ARB's recommendations. As you know, Secretary Clinton asked the Deputy Secretary to lead a team to ensure the implementation of all 29 of the ARB's recommendations, as well as to pursue steps above and beyond those recommended in the Board's report. On February 1, the Department provided to your Committee its response to the ARB report, which further underscored the Department's commitment to implementing the ARB's recommendations and described the progress that has already been made toward this goal. As of March 5, the Department has completed nearly half of the steps necessary to implement the ARB's recommendations. Secretary Kerry is committed to working with the Congress to fully implement the remaining reforms recommended by the ARB.

In addition, over the last several months, the Department of State has worked with your Committee and others in Congress to facilitate oversight of policies affecting the security of American diplomatic personnel serving overseas. Starting in September, the Department has participated in more than thirty hearings and briefings for Congressional Members and staff. On January 23, Secretary Clinton appeared before the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees to publicly address Members' questions and to describe the steps taken to implement – and exceed – the recommendations made by the ARB. In addition to these briefings and hearings, Department personnel were made available for interviews with the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The Department has also provided the Congress with access to documents, comprising over 25,000 pages to date, including communications of senior Department officials regarding the security situation in Benghazi. These documents also were available to the ARB during the course of its investigation.

In your letter, you also request access to surveillance footage from the evening of September 11-12, 2012. The interagency has briefed the Congress on several occasions regarding the events that transpired that night, including through the use of surveillance footage at a briefing for all House Members on December 4, 2012, by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has custody and control over closed circuit footage from the attacks and the Department of Defense has custody and control over existing drone footage. We ask that you direct your request to the relevant agency or bureau in this regard.

We share your interest in continuing to improve our understanding of the tragic events in Benghazi. Please contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas B. Gibbons". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Thomas B. Gibbons
Acting Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs