

RPTR KERR

EDTR HOFSTAD

SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: [REDACTED]

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2015

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-205,
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 10:00 a.m.

Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

DANA CHIPMAN, CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

SHARON JACKSON, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

CARLTON DAVIS, INVESTIGATOR

SARA BARRINEAU, INVESTIGATOR

SHERIA CLARKE, COUNSEL

KIM BETZ, MEMBER OUTREACH LIAISON

SUSANNE SACHSMAN GROOMS, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR/GENERAL COUNSEL

HEATHER SAWYER, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

RONAK DESAI, MINORITY COUNSEL

BRENT WOOLFORK , MINORITY SENIOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF

DANIEL REBNORD, MINORITY PROFESSIONAL STAFF

For the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

AUSTIN EVERS, SENIOR ADVISOR

Ms. Barrineau. We'll go on the record.

This is a transcribed interview of [REDACTED] conducted by the House Select Committee on Benghazi. This interview is being conducted voluntarily as part of the committee's investigation into the attacks on the U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, and related matters pursuant to House Resolution 567 of the 113th Congress and House Resolution 5 of the 114th Congress.

Could the witness please state your name for the record?

Mr. [REDACTED]

Ms. Barrineau. The committee appreciates your appearance at the interview this morning, Agent [REDACTED]

Good morning. My name is Sara Barrineau, with the committee's majority staff. And I'll let everyone else in the room introduce themselves, too.

Ms. Jackson. I'm Sharon Jackson with the majority staff.

Ms. Sawyer. Heather Sawyer with the minority.

Mr. Woolfork. I'm Brent Woolfork on the minority staff.

Mr. Rebnord. Dan Rebnord with the minority.

Mr. Desai. Ronak Desai with the minority.

Mr. Davis. I'm Carlton Davis, and I work for Mr. Gowdy.

Mr. Chipman. I'm Dana Chipman. I'm with the minority staff.

Ms. Clarke. Sheria Clarke with the majority staff.

Mr. Chipman. Did I say "minority"?

Ms. Clarke. You did.

Mr. Chipman. I meant majority. Thank you. I apologize.

Ms. Betz. I'm Kim Betz with the majority staff.

Mr. Evers. Austin Evers for the State Department.

Ms. Barrineau. Thank you.

Before we begin, I'd like to go over the ground rules and explain how the interview will proceed.

The way the questioning proceeds is that a member from the majority will ask questions first for up to an hour, and then the minority will have an opportunity to ask questions for an equal period of time if they choose. We firmly adhere to the 1-hour time limit for each side. Questions may only be asked by a member of the committee or designated staff member. We will rotate back and forth, 1 hour per side, until we are out of questions, and then the interview will be over.

Unlike a testimony or a deposition in Federal court, the committee format is not bound by the rules of evidence. The witness or their counsel may raise objections for privilege, subject to review by the chairman of the committee. If these objections cannot be resolved in the interview, the witness can be required to return for a deposition or hearing.

Members and staff of the committee, however, are not permitted to raise objections when the other side is asking questions. This has not been an issue we've encountered in the past, but we just want to make sure you're clear on the process.

This session is to begin as unclassified. If any question calls for a classified answer, please let us know, and we'll reserve its answer until we move into a classified setting, usually after lunch.

You're welcome to confer with counsel at any time throughout the interview. And I see that you've brought your counsel with you. But if anything needs to be clarified, we ask that the witness make this known. If you need to discuss anything with your counsel, we will go off the record and stop the clock to provide you this opportunity.

We'll take a break whenever is convenient for you. It can be after every hour of questioning, after a couple of rounds, whatever you need. If you need anything -- water, sweet tea, use of the facilities, or to confer with your counsel -- just let us know, and we'll go off the record and stop the clock. We just want to make this as easy and comfortable for you as possible.

As you can see, an official reporter is taking down everything you say to make a written record, so we ask that you give verbal responses to all questions, "yes" and "no," as opposed to nods of the head.

I'm going to ask the reporter to please feel free to jump in if we respond nonverbally or if I start talking too fast. We should also be careful to not talk over each other, as it makes it harder for them to get a clear record. And I'm as guilty of that as anyone.

We want to make sure you answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible, so we will take our time and repeat or clarify if necessary. If you have any questions or do not understand

any of our questions, please let us know. We'll be happy to clarify or repeat.

If you honestly don't know the answer to a question or don't remember, it's best not to guess. Please just give us your best recollection, and if there are things you don't know or can't remember, just say so, and tell us if you know who might be able to answer those questions.

You're required to -- I know you know this as an agent, but you're required to answer questions from Congress truthfully. Do you understand that?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Barrineau. Do you understand that this also applies to questions posed by congressional staff in an interview?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Barrineau. And do you understand that witnesses that knowingly provide false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury or making false statements?

Mr. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Barrineau. Is there any reason you are unable to provide truthful answers to today's questions?

Mr. [REDACTED] No.

Ms. Barrineau. Okay. That's the end of the preamble.

Heather, do you guys have anything?

Ms. Sawyer. No, thanks.

Ms. Barrineau. Okay. The clock reads 10:04, and we'll start

with the first round.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Agent [REDACTED] could you tell us a bit about your professional background before you joined DS?

A Sure. [REDACTED], I was a United States Marine. I served as a Marine security guard in [REDACTED] and in [REDACTED]. After separating from the Marine Corps honorably, I went to college at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. After my studies were complete [REDACTED], I worked for a private security contractor in Iraq [REDACTED] and joined Diplomatic Security in [REDACTED] 2006.

Q And what have your assignments been with DS?

A With DS, I've served domestically. I started in 2006 at the [REDACTED] field office. After [REDACTED], I served as assistant regional security officer in [REDACTED]. After [REDACTED], I was assigned to the Joint Terrorism Task Force, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force [REDACTED].

After that assignment, I served 1 year at the [REDACTED] resident office -- Diplomatic Security's [REDACTED] resident office in [REDACTED]. I then went to Arabic language training for 1 year and served a permanent assignment in -- well, I'm currently assigned to the U.S. Embassy in [REDACTED].

Q Where during that timeline did you find out and then serve in Benghazi?

A While I was serving in [REDACTED], so 2012 -- so 2011-2012.

Q Did you volunteer? Did they ask you to go?

A I volunteered to serve in Benghazi.

Q How did you find out about it?

A As I recall, there was a broadcast message, which is typical for these type of assignments, for the Bureau or the Department to ask for volunteers, and I answered the call.

Q Do you remember -- and I know this was several years ago. Do you remember how much time from when you said, "Yes, I'll go," till when they had you on a plane?

A I don't recall the exact timeframe. I can speculate to say 30 days.

Q Okay. That's good.

I guess at that point you had already completed high-threat training?

A Correct.

Q Was it required at the time for everyone going into Benghazi to have completed the high-threat training?

A As I recall, I think it was required for everyone to serve -- or to have that training, the high-threat training.

Q Before you left to go to Benghazi, did DS provide you with any kind of security briefing or information or meetings or anything like that?

A I was assigned to work criminal investigations in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I had limited access to classified systems. If I needed to read something on the classified side, I would generally ask the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I can't recall if I went over and read anything -- any classified, you know, security assessments or anything prior to my departure.

I do recall having email correspondence and maybe even had a phone call with personalities at post -- by "post," I mean Benghazi -- and also people -- I'm certain I corresponded with International Programs here in DS.

Q Do you remember who in International Programs you were talking to?

A Certainly, the desk officer, [REDACTED] and I think the region director at the time was [REDACTED].

Q So based on what they had told you, both at post and in D.C., what did you understand the situation in Benghazi to be in terms of, kind of, what you were getting into, if that makes any sense?

A I can't recall exactly what our conversations -- it was over 3 years ago. However, I'm confident to state that it was a high-threat post. I knew that if I needed the training to be a high-threat -- you know, high-threat-trained, that the situation -- or that the post required those type of skills from an agent going out there. So it wasn't, for example, Paris, where you wouldn't need that type of training.

Q Okay. Let me ask this. Did you know before you got there if the facility had the traditional diplomatic status or official

diplomatic status that you were used to, say, during your time in [REDACTED]? Did you know it to be any different?

Mr. Evers. Do you understand what she's asking?

Mr. [REDACTED] Could you maybe elaborate a little bit more?

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Sure.

So, because you've done some time overseas, you understand, you know, what an embassy or consulate is and the official diplomatic status that comes it. Were you given any indication before you got to Benghazi that it might be a different type of facility?

Does that make sense?

A I mean, what I can -- how I can answer that is, you know, I read the message --

Q Uh-huh.

A -- I volunteered to serve at the post. And I don't really ask too many questions following what I'm being asked to do, which is provide a safe and ^{secure}~~security~~ environment for the conduct of diplomacy. So when I answered that, I understood that I was going to serve that purpose.

Q Okay.

So when you got to Benghazi, what was the security environment both at the compound and in the city at large?

A When I arrived off the plane, landed in Benghazi, you know, there was no uniformed police on the streets. Militias were the flavor of the day, who provided security services to the city. You generally

can move freely. We didn't incur any problems from my experience at the airport to when I arrived at the compound.

Q Could you identify a militia from a civilian or additional, like, various militias from one another? Does that make sense? You know, in this country, the police are all wearing uniforms that look the same. Could you tell --

A My initial -- you know, upon my initial arrival, no, I couldn't tell you who worked for who, and I don't know if that changed throughout my stay. Again, they were nonuniformed, you know -- when I say "nonuniformed," there was no standard uniform. The militia members, if you will, generally wore whatever they wore. I guess that's the best answer.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q So not even like battle fatigues, camouflage, anything like that? There wasn't even an unofficial uniform or insignia of any kind?

A Certainly, they wore fatigues, camouflage, utilities, as we would call them in the Marine Corps. But there was no standardization in uniform, which we are familiar with through our Armed Forces. I'm, you know, a former Marine. I know by different patterns of camouflage what each servicemember -- or he or she belongs to. There was not that.

Q Or even in the police department --

A Correct.

Q -- you know the difference between the brown of a sheriff's deputy versus the blue of a trooper or city police officer

or things like that. You saw no regularization, shall we say?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay.

A I did not see uniformity in the appearance of -- again, I'm trying to recall, you know, what happened 3 years ago the best I can, but I don't recall, you know, this unit wearing this particular set of camouflage utilities or this unit wearing this particular -- identifying them as such.

Q Could you distinguish at all between one militia and another? Flags, other emblems, things like that? Were you at any point able to distinguish between sort of a friendly militia and a less friendly militia, if there was such a thing?

A Again, I can't recall, you know, who was friend from -- which militia group we would have had any concerns about. I mean, we had four or five at the time, 17th February Martyrs Brigade soldiers, we'll call them, that were associated with the compound. And they had been with -- or with the American presence there. They had been with us and provided us a quick-reaction-force-type of a capability at the compound, and they were part of the, for lack of better terms, loyal militia. The predominant militia that was in Benghazi at the time was the 17th February guys.

They helped us determine who were friendly from who weren't friendly. And I can't recall a time where we ever had any unfriendly militias that we encountered during my period of time there. I can't recall a time where we encountered any unfriendly militia.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Do you remember when you got to Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q When did you get to Benghazi?

A February 1st, I believe.

Q And --

A I say that so matter-of-factly, but I think it was February 1st.

Q -- do I understand correctly that you started as an ARSO for about a week and then you became the RSO when Agent [REDACTED] left? Is that right?

A When I was asked to go, in my initial volunteer -- when I volunteered for the position, I volunteered knowing that I was going as the regional security officer. I volunteered for the job. International Programs said, hey, you know, we'd like for you to be the temporary regional security officer there.

When I arrived, it was my understanding that the previous RSO and I would turn over for a couple of days, which is customary --

Q That makes sense.

A -- in my previous positions, and then he would go on. Because, again, these were temporary assignments.

Q So when you arrived and it was you and it was the RSO at the time, how many ARSOs were there?

A Including myself, I traveled with another agent, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and I traveled together into Benghazi. When we arrived,

there were three agents on the ground. That's including the RSO, so a total of five agents. We brought the total number of agents on the ground to five when we arrived.

Q Do you remember how long it stayed at five? Or were several of those rotating out?

A The dates and times when people left, you know, escapes me. However, I know that it was only a short period of time while we were all together there.

Q And then during the time you were there, what was -- and, obviously, I don't expect you to remember who came and left when, but what was the average number of agents you had on the compound while you were there, including yourself?

A The number fluctuated, so I don't know if I ever had an average.

Q Did you ever get back to -- once some of those agents rotated out, did you ever have five agents again?

A No.

Q Do you remember if you ever had four agents?

A Yes.

Q You did have four agents --

A Yes.

Q -- at some point. Okay.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Was that early on or later on?

A It would have been later on, towards the end of my time in

Benghazi.

Q Was it a situation again where agents were coming in to replace agents on the ground so you had the overlap again?

A As I recall, that's probably -- that was the situation.

Q Okay.

A Again, you know, personnel would travel to Benghazi, transition with the person that they were replacing, and then the other agents would then depart.

Q Okay.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q But so, for the most part, once the transitions kind of settled, in between transitions, you generally had three or less RSOs on the compound? Is that fair?

A Again, you know, as I reflect on it, I don't know if I want to generalize and say that I only had four or three. You may know better than I do, but four was the maximum number of agents that I had on the ground in Benghazi, including myself. So three agents working with me was the maximum number, so four together.

Q Okay.

So when you got to the compound, what did the compound look like? What was the compound when you got there?

Ms. Jackson. Before that, can I ask --

Ms. Barrineau. I'm sorry.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Was there ever just you at the compound?

A Without other agents, you mean?

Q Yes.

A No.

Q Okay. So there was always at least one other person?

A Yes.

Q Did you always have at least two other people?

A Including myself?

Q No. In addition.

A So three.

Q Yes, three.

A So three agents on the ground. Did I ever have -- I'm sorry, could you ask again?

Q I guess what I'm asking is, was there ever a point where there was just two of you, you and one other agent? Or was it always you and two other agents?

A Again, I believe there was a period of time there was just two of us in Benghazi.

Q Okay.

Ms. Barrineau. Good?

Ms. Jackson. Yeah.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. So when you got to Benghazi, what was the compound like? What was the nature of the compound?

A Could you be more specific about "the nature"?

Q What did it look like? You had some villas.

A Okay. When I arrived, after, you know, not -- we've already said that the arrival to the compound, there was militias, an assortment of militias, no police, but we could move freely about.

When I arrived on the compound, it was 13 acres -- I remember this pretty vividly -- 13 acres. We occupied three dormitories, I will say. We named them Villa A, B, and C. There was a building that we considered as, you know -- it was referred to by, you know, us and the other folks there as the tactical operations center, also as the office.

And then we had another outlying building on the 13-acre compound, which really was three separate, you know, residences, which housed the quick reaction forces I've described before, the 17th February guys, who also lived on compound with us.

Does that answer your question?

Q Uh-huh.

A Okay.

Q So what did you think about -- especially considering you had already served in Islamabad, which was high-threat, what did you think about the physical security of the compound when you arrived?

A The facility itself -- I mean, I'll just say the compound itself, the wall was in poor condition. There was, you know, several things that I have become accustomed to, serving in the Marine Corps overseas, serving as an ARSO in Islamabad, that were absent in Benghazi. You know --

Q Like what?

A The lack of any -- you know, the setback was not what we

had come -- again, that I've become accustomed to and which I know were standards that we try not to deviate from. There was no anti-ram vehicle barriers, if you will, to provide us that protection.

Those were some of the initial impressions. You know, those are some of the -- when you get there, you do see that the wall was in poor condition --

Q Right.

A -- and that there was none of those, you know, those countermeasures, if you will, the countermeasures that are usually outside a diplomatic facility. Well, I shouldn't -- you know, what I have come to understand are outside a diplomatic facility, the vehicle barriers, those were absent when I arrived.

Q So during your turnover with the RSO, did you discuss any of that?

A Again, as I recall, with --

Q Understood.

A -- speaking with [REDACTED] you know, we identified various weaknesses, various projects, various things that he either wanted to start or things that he had asked for funding to start, things that he did while he was there, and, you know, where to kind of go during my -- where to go or what's in the queue for the next couple of months.

So, yes, we did turn over, you know, some of those projects that we both wanted to -- that we both, I think, felt were necessary to improve our situation there.

Q Do you remember what requests maybe you inherited that he

had already made that you were still waiting on?

A I believe [REDACTED] requested funding for a drop-arm. And when I say "drop-arm," that was supposed to prevent people from being able to just drive up right into the front gate of our facility.

He had also asked for some funding for some sandbags.

Again, none of these -- again, he had asked for the funding, but it took a while for the -- when you add -- you know, the process is, you ask for money, and then it comes to you. There is some, you know, making sure that, you know, our requests are adequate, appropriate, and then the money is disbursed to Tripoli. And then it's -- you know, it was a cash economy at the time, so that money had to get to us before we could identify contractors and work to be under way.

So those are the two projects that I can readily recall that he started.

Q Did you make any additional requests while you were there for physical security upgrades?

A Certainly.

Q What did you request?

A Again, you know, I carried forward with some of the things that [REDACTED] wanted.

When the money was appropriated for the sandbags, we identified places to deploy these sandbag fighting positions, as we called them, you know, to give us these concentric -- you know, our security, you know, developed around a concentric rings theory. You've probably heard it over the period of other folks talking about it, but we wanted

to improve our ability to either defend from -- you know, to take the compound back or, you know, to give ourselves an opportunity for a fight and retreat. And that was the idea between the sandbags.

They're not, you know, in most -- in my experience, sandbags are not deployed at, you know, diplomatic facilities, but we believed they were important to give ourselves an opportunity to defend the compound if need be.

I also -- again, [REDACTED] had asked for the drop-arm. Well, we were able to get -- with the money that he had asked for, we were able to get another, so two drop-arms. And that work was performed while I was there.

You know, you don't need to be an expert in physical security, which I don't claim to be at all, but knowing that the wall was a major source of concern for myself, for my predecessor -- I don't want to speak for him, but I know when we were walking around, that was obviously a concern for all of us. So, you know, I worked with Diplomatic Security to improve the wall.

And there were obstacles to improving the wall. The answer was -- the short answer was OBO, Overseas Building Office, because it was a short-term lease, we couldn't improve the wall. We had to ask the landlord to improve the wall. And up until that point, my amount of confidence in getting the landlord to do anything was absent. There just wasn't any. We had other projects, the generator, you know, that the landlord just didn't pay attention to.

So we, myself and DS, the physical security experts back in

Washington, came up with a plan to build a temporary chain-link fence that would bring a -- you know, specifications were something that we all agreed upon, and it gave us some type of a level of comfort for an antipersonnel measure, so that if people were able to get over the wall, they would also have to defeat a chain-link fence with razor wire around it. Again, this is the concentric rings theory, was to kind of delay, you know, someone from intruding on the compound.

Q Did that temporary chain-link fence ever -- was that ever built while you were there? I don't know if "built" is the right word, but --

A I understand.

The work began roughly 2 weeks before I departed. Again, we'd identified the problem, requested the amount of funding, identified a contractor to perform the work -- which, again, it's a cash economy. There weren't a lot of -- you know, it's not like you can pick up a phone and go through the Yellow Pages there and find someone. You know, it's really word of mouth or you're relying on, you know, your locals to help you with it.

We identified a contractor to do the work, agreed on a price of the work, and the money was allocated. We paid him 20 percent. He began the work prior to me leaving. A couple of weeks after -- you know, we agreed upon a plan, blueprints, if you will, and the work began.

Q Aside from the fact that it was a cash economy, did you have other funding issues back in D.C., with it being a temporary mission?

A The money that I requested to Diplomatic Security I

received. Today, if I want to reflect on it, would I have been -- I felt, you know, that if I had the money in my pockets, I could have been able to -- the work would have been performed earlier.

The work was performed, however, not as timely as I wanted it to be, I guess is the way that I want to characterize that.

Q So, essentially, if the money had been at post instead of -- is that what you're saying? Instead of having to go through D.C. and Tripoli and then get cash? I just want to make sure I understand what you're saying.

A I think that's fair, yes. If we had the money at post and -- if I had the money at post, you know, if I was able to spend the money -- you know, I'm an official for the U.S. Government. I'm entrusted with a lot as a DS special agent. You know, I wanted the ability to go ahead and perform work, pay for that work, and then on the back end be able to tell people, "This is what I spent it for," and be able to -- you know, justify it that way, because it just made sense in my mind. Not necessarily -- I don't know if that's the appropriate way to do it, but for me, that was some of my frustration.

I can also discuss some of the other projects my team --

Q Absolutely.

A -- undertook while we were there aside from the fence.

We also -- again, I don't know if it was necessarily my team's brainstorming or, you know, a combination of the previous regimes and myself, but we also knew that there was bars. If you travel abroad, you often see bars on windows because the crime -- you know, to prevent

people from breaking in. Well, they don't always think that you need to get out of those in a fire. So we identified that there was a weakness, that you couldn't get out if there was a fire.

So, again, we identified some -- you know, identified a contractor to come in and cut those window grilles off and then replace them with a system that was very, very, you know, rudimentary, but it worked, to get out in case of a fire. We strategically located those in different buildings so, you know, there was at least one or two in each of the buildings so that if there was a fire you could escape from the building.

And, you know, that was one of the more -- you know, we took a lot of pride to get that done and then, after the fact, know that that was used.

Q Uh-huh.

A We also identified that, you know, there was no protection once -- you know, the methodology is to kind of bunker up -- at that point, the methodology was to kind of consolidate forces, bunker up, and then try to see what the situation was going on. Because we did have personnel on compound that were not -- you know, they didn't -- they weren't, for lack of better terms, gun-toters. They weren't DS agents, they weren't responsible for security. Those persons were the information management officer and the principal officer or any other TDYers that had come to post.

So we devised a very, you know, rudimentary safe haven, for lack of a better term, a gate, you know, that was [REDACTED] inside

of the marble that, you know, protected, something that we could lock that would, again, delay adversaries to getting to our people. And we slept behind that, and I think in one of the villas.

Since that worked so well, I sought funding to create, you know, the same type of model in each one of our other -- the TOC and also one of the other dormitories. I sought funding for it. I don't know if the work was completed or not.

There were some other -- again, the other projects that we undertook. I mean, a visiting technical security team from Cairo came out and, you know, improved cameras, improved the lighting on the compound. There used to be vineyards on the compound. We just demolished all of the vegetation that had overgrown where people could find cover and concealment on the compound to make it easier for us to see what's going on at night.

You know, and my team -- and, I mean, really, the guys that I worked with there were very helpful, allowing me to accomplish some of these tasks. Because we all had, you know, a commitment to make things better for the next team that came in. And I think that that's just not -- you know, just not us that were thinking about that, you know. People before us were doing the same, and, you know, people afterwards, I'm certain, were doing the same.

Q Even with those upgrades that you made -- and it sounds like you made a lot of progress in 2 months -- did the compound then look like something you were more accustomed to in an overseas high-threat environment, or was it still lacking and you were essentially making

do with the best you could?

A In my experience --

Q Yes.

A -- Benghazi, the Special Mission Compound or facility did not look like other places I had been.

Q Did you make any requests that were just flat-out denied or refused?

A I can't recall.

Q Do you remember if anyone in D.C. ever put parameters on what you could request? "You can request these field-expedient things, but don't even bother requesting these things."

A Yeah, I can't recall if I was told that.

Q Okay.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Other than the wall?

A Right.

Q Right.

A Other than the wall. And, again, to clarify, the wall, you know, there was a -- you know, DS, we wanted to find a solution for that. The guys back in Washington, you know, we created a solution over email. Said, hey, this was a weakness, this was the restriction, let's get over that obstacle. I think, you know, we had a common, you know, approach to let's fix this, because we identified it as a vulnerability.

Q Right.

So were there any other issues that you identified, like the wall, where you had conversations with Washington where they said we're not going to fund that so let's go think of another way to get around this issue?

A The wall is the one thing that sticks out in my mind. And, again, I just want to -- you know, I do want to, you know, make sure that's clear that we did find a solution.

Q Right.

A It wasn't, you know, what we originally intended, which was improving the walls, but it was a solution.

Q Uh-huh.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Did you at least feel comfortable in making requests back to D.C.? Does that make sense?

A Yeah. I felt comfortable.

Q Okay. Let's go back to the staffing on the compound. And we talked about the DS agents. Tell me about the local -- what did you think of the local guard force when you arrived? What was your impression of them?

A Could you be more clear, I guess, who -- local guard force?

Q Okay, let's do both. Let's do the unarmed guards, for lack of a better word, and then we can talk about the 17th Feb QRFs.

A Okay. And the original question? I'm sorry.

Q Just what was your impression of the local guard force in terms of your other overseas experience and then what you thought of

those guys specifically.

A I'm going to base my answer off of what I've experienced in [REDACTED]. I had a contract guard force in [REDACTED], which was, you know -- contract guard force, I believe it was G4S at the time, 1,000-plus guards on a contract. They were trained by the guard contractor and given to us trained, ready to assume their positions. So I was familiar with guard forces prior to coming to Benghazi.

Now, when I arrived to Benghazi, we were in the midst of formalizing our guard force there. I was on the selection process for the guard contractor.

The guards, my impression was the question, of the guards that were there?

Q Uh-huh.

A They wanted to help. They needed the training to do their job. I think that's a good answer for that.

Q Did you feel the same way -- after you got the contract with the Blue Mountain Group and you started that, did that help any? Was that better? Or did you still feel that they were lacking training?

A As I recall it, many of the guards that we had under the previous -- before there was a contractor were absorbed by the guard force. I was more than elated when we professionalized the guard force, meaning we had standards to hold the guard contractor to, but we allowed them a certain amount of time to, you know, assume their roles as this professional guard force.

So with that came training on how to stand post. I mean, you know,

they started from, you know, the grassroots before we -- but they were still working as guards while we were there. I mean, this was something that we agreed to, you know. This was an expeditionary mission, and, you know, we were cognizant of the fact that we needed guards, they knew that we needed guards, and they wanted to train them. We met together that we wanted -- we had a common objective to make sure that the guards were professionals standing post.

And, you know, I was happy with the choice that we made to go with this contract guard force, to go with the group that we eventually -- that the Department eventually solicited the contract to.

Q Could you tell a difference as the training went on that the service that the guards were providing was getting better?

A Again, I can't recall, but there -- I mean, one instance, you know, comes into my mind. This was after the guard force was handed over to Blue Mountain, that the guards did what we expected them to do. You know, they initiated an alarm, and they sought cover. And that initiating alarm allowed us to react a certain and appropriate way.

So I was impressed with that, and I always commended my guards on doing that type of a job, because it was difficult in those type of circumstances. You know, guarding American diplomats in Benghazi is not something that's easy to do, and especially when we're asking people that are not formerly police officers or military, you know, to do this type of a job. It's just different standards, you know.

It's not asking somebody out here who knows what, you know, a mall -- for instance, we know what mall security guards do, you know, and so we kind of grow up in this idea of what a security person professional does. There they didn't have that. These guys were -- you know, some of them were educated, you know. They went, you know, and they were just finding employment at our facility.

So they did what we expected them to do under some tough circumstances.

Q So you said that you expected them to sound an alarm and seek cover. Was that essentially their role?

A Varying roles, right? So each position has different post orders, if you will. And I can't recall directly which post did what. But, you know, one of my agents or both of them that worked with me, you know, identified guard orders for each of the posts, you know.

But, essentially, you know, if you're a guard, you're supposed to observe and report, you know. We're not asking you to do -- they're unarmed guards. We're not asking them to put themselves in any more harm's way than they already were, being assigned to an American mission overseas.

Q So then let's discuss the other half of that. What did you think about the 17th Feb QRF that you had that were living there? What was your impression of --

Ms. Jackson. Before we go to 17th Feb, I've got just a couple of questions --

Ms. Barrineau. Okay.

Ms. Jackson. -- on the local guard force.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q You said that many of your existing guards were absorbed by the Blue Mountain contract. Do you have a sense of how long they had been there prior to being absorbed by this contract? I mean, had they been there a matter of a couple of weeks or a couple of months?

The facility had opened in the summer of 2011, so it's 6, 7, 8 months in existence by then.

A Ma'am, I don't recall who stayed and who went when the new guard contract came on board. I know that some of them were absorbed. Some of them were let go, either because of performance issues or because they couldn't pass the, you know, strict, you know, HR process of Blue Mountain. There was a number of reasons why some of them stayed and some of them didn't stay, so I couldn't recall exactly what some of those were.

Q Okay. I just want to try to get your assessment of, if they had been there for 6 months, why did they not know the rudimentary tasks that were expected of them -- asking visitors who they were, screening vehicles, sounding the duck-and-cover alarm? You know, why is it that there was this basic training that was required if guards had been there for at least 6 months prior to your arrival?

A I don't want to say that the training or the nature of the work that they did was rudimentary. Some of those, you know, tasks are -- you know, they seem to us to be kind of standard for a guard, but for, you know, others who perform these security tasks, they are

quite involved.

And I think that, you know, training is a big -- is something that is constant. And if throughout that process -- again, I can't speak for what happened before I got there. What I can speak for in my experience was that when a guard was on the contract -- or the guard was assigned to our facility, we took an interest in developing that particular guard to make sure that he -- it was a he; they were all males -- that he knew what his job was and that there were disciplinary actions for when they didn't.

If that disciplinary action before the Blue Mountain folks got there was termination, they were terminated. We would tell them they're not coming back. I can't tell you how many times that occurred. But, you know, if we found them not performing their job, we would take corrective action, because it was important for us.

And, again, my experiences with another guard force in [REDACTED] was that was a good remedy, to train them how to do their job and then take corrective action when they fail. And if need be, termination may have been an option.

We didn't want people working there that weren't enthusiastic about keeping us safe.

Q Right.

A And we expect these local guards, like we do in many other places, to provide us that level of comfort.

Q Now, you talked about the fact that when you got there they were changing the contract, and you were involved in that selection

process. What were the problems and issues with the prior contract? Because there was some sort of a contract there, right?

A As I understand it, ma'am, there was what's called a life services contract. I don't know or I can't recall what those problems were. I know I was pretty happy when we said we're professionalizing the guard force by hiring a contractor to perform the services. I'm comfortable with that, I'm used to it, as I was in [REDACTED] a very large contract guard force.

So getting this contract guard force is something I was ready to absorb. And I don't know -- I can't recall what the problems were with the previous guard force.

Q All right. Very good.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. So tell us a little bit about the QRF and what your impressions of them were and their role on the compound.

A Maybe you could better describe "impressions." I'm hard at giving feelings. Maybe just, did they perform this, or what was -- maybe --

Q Okay. So you had four to five 17th Feb guys living on the compound.

A Uh-huh.

Q What was their role?

A Okay. What I and my team expected of the 17th February guys were to provide a quick-reaction-force type of capability, which, basically, if we needed -- if we got into a situation where we needed

extra guys with guns, they would assist us in mitigating whatever that threat was.

Now, to give you some examples, when we employed them, we employed them on motorcade movements at times. We employed them to help us respond to incidents on compound where we believed someone may have accessed the facility unauthorized, jumping the wall.

There's other times where we used them basically to just do things that we couldn't get done, menial tasks, if you will. "Go to the store and pick this up for us." "Find me two or three contractors to perform this type of work." They did that. And we couldn't have done what we needed to get done out there without those guys.

Q So you thought they had the capability and appropriate training to do what you were expecting them to do?

A When I assumed my role as the RSO, I had knowledge that they were trained in some form or fashion throughout their time at this special mission compound by other DS agents.

When we were there, we trained them. And when I say "trained them," we trained them on protective security, PRS, if you will, the movement security. We also trained them on reaction to contact, how to, you know, bound and over-watch these military-type small-unit tactics, things that we get in our high-threat training that all the agents are comfortable explaining to this force.

I observed their training. The other agents observed their training. We observed them in the field when we were doing these type of things. And I was confident that they stuck their neck out for us

on quite a few times.

And, again, I don't want to discount the fact that working with the Americans anywhere, you know, much less in Libya, is probably, you know, a scary endeavor for some. And these folks were brave enough to step up and say, we're going to help you here.

And they worked for 17th February. 17th Feb, as I've explained, was the predominant militia force that was in Benghazi at the time. They seemed to have the most representation with other -- they were the most powerful, I guess, for lack of a better term, and they could get things done.

Q Did you trust that if you needed them that they would respond in some kind of a security incident?

A It was my experience that when we needed them they showed up. When I say "they," the four, five, or whoever was on compound. Again, they wanted to help. They were eager to help us.

Q Did you have any issues with them at all?

A When you say "issues"?

Q Well, in general, but specifically an issue with stipends and host nation not paying them so they were somewhat disgruntled?

A Again, I can't recall, you know, exact moments in time where they had problems getting paid. I know that we paid them a stipend for being there, which is, in my experience, customary with other police forces that provide us protection. But that stipend is to offset the cost of meals and other incidentals for them having to, you know, live and work with us. We pay them so that they can go pay for a meal away

from their homes.

I do recall some problems with their government, the transitioning government at the time, not being able to pay for them for their service either after the revolution or during the revolution. I think there were some problems with them getting paid.

Q But did it affect the level of performance, for lack of a better word, that you were getting from them?

A I don't recall if that affected them. Again, my general, you know -- when I asked them to help, they helped.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Was it your understanding that they were going to be, if need be, augmented by the larger Feb 17th Brigade?

A When you say "augmented"?

Q So if an incident happened at the compound or you're in a movement and there's an issue at a checkpoint and it appears that it may be more than you can handle, whoever's there, was it your understanding that they could call in more reinforcements to assist?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Was there an agreement to do that?

A I met with one of the, I guess, for lack of better terms, a sub-commander at the 17th February on a number of occasions. Maybe I met with a couple of people maybe. I'm certain I met with some of the leadership, you know. And through, you know, an interpreter -- I didn't speak Arabic at the time -- we were able to, you know, come to some level of agreement that if we needed assistance they were but a

phone call away. And that phone call typically would be from our QRF guys. The QRF guys were subordinate to the sub-commanders that I spoke to.

With that said, I also -- you know, there's at least one incident that, you know, these guys did show up and help us out.

Q Can you tell us about that?

A There's two incidents, one I'd prefer to speak about, you know, in a classified setting, and the other incident was when we had -- the guards did exactly what we explained before. They initiated the duck-and-cover, and it was a militia -- there was a disturbance outside of our gates. The guards initiated duck-and-cover. We reacted, and our 17th February QRF guys on the compound, you know, were able to coordinate to this other element of, I believe, 17th Feb outside of the compound that was interested in a fire that we had on our compound by one of the local guards.

This other force was investigating, what's this fire on this compound for? And then the guard initiated the duck-and-cover because these guys came up to the gate. And our 17th February guys were able to coordinate with their higher elements there, and they were able to deconflict. The situation mitigated.

The other topic we can talk about in another setting.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. Aside from the other situation we can discuss in a classified setting, did you have any other security incidents while you were at post?

A Oh, there were several, and, again, I can't recall specifics on each, but they were reported to DS, you know, using our spot reports.

RPTR BINGHAM

EDTR HOFSTAD

[11:00 a.m.]

Mr. [REDACTED] And, you know, I think I explained, the one was the intruder on the compound. I think we had a couple of those while we were there. It turned out we didn't, so we never, you know, found anybody that reported had climbing over the walls. And we collectively responded together.

I am trying to recall. You know, there was one instance that we reported where myself and another agent were detained for a short period of time by, you know, a local militia. And it turned out that local militia was somehow associated with the 17th February guys. And, again, this is another example where the QRF was able to ensure that we, you know, escaped the situation with, you know, handshakes and smiles.

We were in an area doing some advance work, and we were detained by guards, essentially, that had no idea who we were, what we were doing out there. And then it moved to, you know, a more -- an escort, if you will, to another katahb, another camp, down the road, where we were, you know, told to wait here until we figure this thing out.

You know, that, of course, elevated our response. "How are we going to get out of this? What are we going to do?" But the 17th February guys were able to communicate, you know, what we were doing, that it was, you know -- part of what we do out there was make sure that the place where the principal officer wanted to go was safe. And

we were able to eventually mitigate the situation. But it kind of highlights the 17th February guys' work and how they were effective in doing their job for us.

I mean, Benghazi, at that time -- I mean, it is just not -- you know, I say "Paris," but, you know, it was an environment where there had just been a war, and there was no security and -- no formidable security. We had freedom of movement. We could get around using basic, you know, precautions during the day. You know, we stayed off the road at night. But -- so I can't recall any other security incidents that we were involved in.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q So what was the general response on the compound? Because it seems like a lot of the incidents fell into the, kind of, category of someone who shouldn't be on the compound trying to come onto the compound or allegedly trying to come onto the compound. When something like that happened, what was the response on the compound?

A I'll approach it two ways.

So, one, as I explained to you, the guard initiated what we call the duck-and-cover, that he has a pendant on his person, on his neck, and he initiates that. That sends an alarm throughout the whole, the facility.

Now, we would -- again, during my time, we would respond by isolating personnel within the safe haven, which was in our primary dormitory. One of the agents would stay with the non-DS personnel in the facility. One of the agents at that point was living inside of

the TOC. We had some communications equipment in there that we slept with, as well as our arms. And that agent would then coordinate, you know, with what available resources we had to investigate the situation.

Now, if we had agent personnel, that would involve, you know, utilizing the CCTV cameras that we had. That may require local guards investigating the compound. That may require, you know, the QRF investigating. It may combine ourselves, QRF and the local guard, investigating the area. I can recall an occasion where we did go out, methodically, you know, clear the 13-acre facility to ensure that there was nobody on the grounds. When I say "methodically clear," that is, going out there with guns and moving tactically to ensure that nobody was out there, no threats remained to ourselves or to others.

That's typical. That was a -- I shy away from "typical" because every situation is so different and depending on what we had at the time. But we responded -- we had a, you know, plan to respond to those types of ~~defense~~ ^{internal defense situations}.

Q So what you just described took a minimum of three agents, because you said you have an agent in the TOC, which makes sense, an agent with the non-DS personnel, which makes sense, and a third person who would be helping the QRF or whatever clear the compound.

Would you have felt like you were at a tactical disadvantage or had insufficient resources with less than three agents? Because it seems like if you don't have three agents you have to give up something off that list.

A I don't know if I gave a number of how many agents it required. And sometimes we didn't -- you know, again, I'm trying to recall exactly the instances. But, you know, I believe our intention was to keep always someone with the principal officer or other persons and one person to, you know, manage the situation inside the TOC.

Now, depending on the number of people that we had, DS or other shooters in Benghazi, we would likely attach them to the QRF.

Look, I'm not going to put my folks out there if I don't have to. If the QRF is willing to go do a job and we are confident that they can go out there and clear this compound and that we have, you know, CCTV coverage, you know -- I mean, it sounds, you know, heartless a little bit, but if my local guards who are getting paid to do a job can investigate something, if the QRF or their government at the time is expecting them to help provide us protection, I'm going to have them go do it instead of sending a DS agent out there to respond to this type of stuff.

Ideally, if a ^{DS}~~DS~~ agent was there and I was concerned enough that they couldn't investigate that, I would attach a DS agent out there. I can't recall, you know, with any specificity when I attached a DS agent with these guys or if I attached myself to go out there and investigate this.

Again, I would have you look at the reports that -- I am operating under the assumption that you've seen some of these spot reports that I drafted or that my team drafted. And I think that they would probably give a better understanding of how we responded to each of those.

Q I see my time is up. I just want to ask one followup question.

I guess what I'm asking is not necessarily for every specific response, but with less than three agents, did you feel like you were able -- would you have felt like you were able to adequately respond to an event, or would you have felt like you didn't have enough resources?

Mr. Evers. You're asking him to speculate?

Ms. Jackson. Give his opinion. He is a trained official, a trained expert in security.

Mr. [REDACTED] I don't consider myself an expert. I consider -- certainly, I'm learning every day.

It's no mystery that we had personnel, resource limitations out there. I can tell you, when those people came over the wall, we did our job and made sure that the facility was safe for us to continue to be there. I don't want to, you know, say that if we had more people we could have done a better job. The job was performed, and that's, I guess, what I was concerned with.

Ms. Barrineau. Let's go off the record.

[Recess.]

Ms. Jackson. The time is now 11:26.

And by agreement of the staff and with the witness' concurrence, the majority is going to continue their questioning and hopefully finish up in a half-hour, 45 minutes, and then we're going to turn it over to the minority staff to do their questioning, and then we hope

to be done.

So, with that, we will continue, hopefully not for another hour but some amount of time less than that.

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay.

BY MR. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. When we finished up, we were talking about staffing and security incidents. Did you, while you were there, make any requests for additional staffing, be it DS agents or hiring locals or military support from Tripoli or anything like that?

A Yes. I think all of the above.

Q Were any of those requests granted while you were there?

A Again, I received -- well, not "again" -- I received support from a special forces team that was based out of Tripoli. A couple of folks came down and visited with me and helped me augment security during the lead-up to the 1-year anniversary of the February 17th revolution. And then also I requested additional DS personnel while I was there.

Q Did you get any additional DS personnel?

A I guess maybe you could define "additional" for me. I requested -- there was a suggestion -- not a suggestion -- there was an expectation of having five agents on the ground. I requested, you know, the five agents.

Q But aside from the turnover at the beginning, that was never -- I don't want to say "granted," but that never happened again, right?

A During my time there?

Q Right.

A No.

Q What did the special forces team from Tripoli -- were they are helpful? What did they do?

A I don't know if I'm comfortable talking about their particular presence in this setting.

Q Okay. Then let me ask this. Did you find them to be an asset to the compound?

A Yes.

Q And did you request that they be able to stay longer?

A Yes.

Q And was that request granted, or did they end up going back to Tripoli?

A I can't recall if I requested that they stay longer as part of their trip down to visit with me. I do recall requesting that they come to Benghazi in some form of temporary or permanent fashion while we were there.

Q Did that ever happen?

A Not while I was there. The request happened.

Q Right.

A But they never visited Benghazi during my time again after they departed.

Q Do you know who made the decision for them not to visit Benghazi again?

A I can't recall if that was ever intimated to me.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Can you describe for us in a little more detail the benefits that the SFT brought?

A I'd prefer not to do it in here, I think, just because I don't know how sensitive their presence in Libya was. I'm just more comfortable maybe describing what they had.

[Discussion held off the record.]

Mr. ████████ Yeah. They were there to augment our security. My understanding when I requested them from Tripoli was that they would come down and give us security support. And that entailed them being an additional security resource. When we did movement security, they would jump in the motorcade with one of the other agents.

You know, they were also beneficial to our compound defense, if you will, identifying things that they thought, you know, may be helpful to provide more security for the compound. "You can do this. This may be helpful."

They also helped provide medical training to my DS agents. You know, we're always doing that type of stuff. In my experience, when you have a military somewhere, you, you know, do cross-training, and that's what we did. We showed them how to do personal security, and they showed us some advanced medical training.

Q Okay. And, obviously, SFT was all military.

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay.

And I just missed it. How many agents came from Tripoli, or how many ~~SST~~ ^{SST} members came from --

A Two.

Q Two?

A Uh-huh.

Q Okay. And it was your understanding that -- do you know how many, typically, are in an ~~SST~~ ^{SST} team?

A Ma'am, I don't know.

Q Okay. But you requested ~~SST~~ ^{SST} support for Benghazi.

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay.

A Let me clarify that. I requested security support during the revolution. The ~~SST~~ ^{SST} was what was offered, and that was what was accepted.

After they departed is when myself and the ~~SST~~ ^{SST} agreed to work within our respective chains to see if we could get a more permanent or a temporary solution down there after they departed.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Do you know what they thought about the Special Mission Compound? "They," the ~~SST~~ ^{SST}.

A I couldn't begin to speculate what they thought.

Q Okay.

Let's switch gears just a little bit. I know you didn't have any security issues, you said, when you were leaving the airport. But did you, upon arrival in Benghazi, have some issues with some gear being

lost?

A Yes. I don't know if it was lost or if it was just -- it didn't make it there when I was there.

Q Did it ever make it there, or were you without that gear the entire time you were there?

A I had -- it wasn't just gear. It was my, you know -- everything that I brought with me. Two suitcases were misplaced or lost for several days when I first arrived.

Q So was there additional gear -- because I assume that in your suitcases would have been some gear that you would take to a high-threat post.

A Can we define "gear"? That'd be helpful. Or you define "gear" for me, what you think "gear" is.

Q Aside from clothes and personal items, were there things in your suitcase that you would've used to do your job in a high-threat environment that you were missing? I mean, magazine holders, vests, personal protective equipment.

A Yes. I traveled with my personal protective equipment with me to Benghazi.

Q And was some of that not there when you arrived?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. Was there sufficient equipment at the compound for you to be able to use until yours showed up? Or was it just, since every agent brought their own, there was no extra? Does that make sense?

A Again, as I recall, there was equipment in Benghazi for me to do my job, which, I mean, we can define as the personal protective equipment. There was that equipment there. Yes.

Q Okay.

What kind of weapons did you have at the SMC?

Mr. [REDACTED] Can I talk to Austin?

Ms. Barrineau. Uh-huh.

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. [REDACTED] And the reason I -- obviously, you know, the sensitivity of having weapons at a diplomatic facility is something that we, you know -- or, you know, there's concern we could talk about. But we had a sidearm, which was a Sig Sauer 9-millimeter, and M4 carbine rifles, 223 or 556, weapons system. We had, you know, other, you know, diversionary devices -- the flash-bangs, smoke, if you will, signal smoke. That's what I recall. We had that, and we had ammunition for all of the weapons systems that were there.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q So I assume that DS agents, that you guys were all trained on all of those things. Did you ever take the initiative to familiarize the principal officer or the IMO with any of the weapons on site?

A Yes. I can't recall if it was both the IMO and the principal officer or one or separate or who I exposed to the weapons systems that we had, but I did show them. I vividly remember it was myself and another agent showing them how the proper employment of those weapons was.

Q What made you take the initiative to do that?

A I can't recall why I felt it necessary at a particular moment in time. But it's my understanding that foreign service officers go through FACT training, so this wasn't something uncommon for them to know, how a weapon works overseas. And "FACT" being the foreign affairs counter-threat training.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Was it your understanding that the political officer or IMO had, in fact, had the FACT training?

A I recall not -- the non-DS personnel, which are the PO and the IM or the IMO, that somebody did not have that training, did not have the foreign affairs counter-threat training. But I can't tell you which one had it or which one hadn't had it, so --

Q Did one actually have it?

A I believe --

Q Just your recollection.

A Again, my recollection is one person had that.

Q Okay.

A And I think it's important to note that I had two principal officers during my time and the same management officer while I was there.

Q Okay.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q That's a good transition. Let's talk about the principal officers while you were there. Who were your principal officers while

you were in Benghazi?

A [REDACTED] was my principal officer when I arrived. And [REDACTED] was the principal officer that took over for [REDACTED], and she remained there until after I departed.

Q Were they generally cooperative? And by that I mean, did they defer to your security expertise and recommendations?

A From what I can recall, we worked on solutions together. I mean, it's usually, you know -- "usually." In my experience, it has been, if there's an objective that someone needs to go -- I can give an example -- if someone needs to go somewhere, you know, I may or may not say, "This is something we can execute; let me gather some information," or I may go to the extreme and say, "No, we can't do that," but somewhere usually it falls in the middle. We compromise on what we can reasonably expect to pull off.

And I think that we found, you know, solutions to problems. Or, I shouldn't say "problems." You know, I prefer to, you know -- we found solutions. If I was to say, "We shouldn't do this," they may counter and say, "Why can't we do this?", and I explain myself, and then we agree or we disagree. And then, if it comes to we can't find, you know, some common ground, then, you know, we may ask for an intermediary, someone outside the problem to kind of weigh in.

But I think it is important to note that the principal officer is ultimately, you know, the person in charge of the mission. So, you know, I worked at the pleasure of the principal officer and, ultimately, the Ambassador in Tripoli and Diplomatic Security.

Q Were there any movements or overnight trips or anything like that that you felt uncomfortable doing or -- I guess we'll just stop there. Were there any that you felt uncomfortable doing?

A Yes.

Q And did you express that?

A Yes.

Q And can you give us an example of something you felt uncomfortable and said, I don't think that's a good idea for X reason?

A What comes to my mind is a trip that the principal officer wanted to take to the eastern city of Derna. And I can't recall specifics as to why I said this isn't something that we can reasonably execute, but I recall saying, you know, we can't do this.

And, again, I don't know what the reaction was. It's hard to, you know, remember what his response was. It was [REDACTED] that wanted to go there. But we didn't go. So, in essence, my advice was what stopped us from going out there.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Do you recall why the principal officer felt it was important to make that trip?

A I can't recall, ma'am.

Q Do you recall who the principal officer was reporting to?

A Ma'am, I can't recall. In my experience, the principal officer generally reports to the Ambassador, and that would be in Tripoli.

Q Do you recall whether the principal officer was reporting

back to anyone in Washington at either State Department headquarters or any other agency?

A I can't recall.

Q I have just a couple of followup questions. I'm going to jump around just a little bit.

You said during your service with the Marine Corps you were a Marine security guard?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. And, again, where were you assigned as an MSG?

A I was assigned to, first, the American Embassy in [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and after that I was assigned to the Embassy in [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Q Okay. And neither of those were high-threat posts, were they?

A No, ma'am.

Q Okay. So you had --

A If I can correct, the term "high-threat post" I think was used, you know, after the Benghazi attack. The "high-threat post" term became synonymous with maybe dangerous places. That's just my opinion.

Q Okay. But there certainly were embassies that were considered much more of a security risk than others back then? Paris versus Pakistan --

A Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

Q -- big difference in --

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. Can you compare and contrast for us Benghazi versus these other experiences that you had either as a Marine or as a DS agent, in particular, the security of the post and places?

A I guess it's important -- as a Marine, you know, you're concerned about, you know, internal defense of the mission. You're kind of -- you're outside of the security decision matrix. You know, you're standing a post, you're responding to events at the embassy. I guess it's for -- at the time, it was for protection of information and -- while I was there -- and of the personnel in the compound.

To compare, you know, my experiences in [REDACTED] and in [REDACTED] and then with Benghazi, I think they're different. You know, it's a different point in time, different regions. The threats in those all very different locations with the threat in Benghazi was also different.

So I guess it's hard for me to -- you know, maybe if you kind of maybe went step by step how I should -- you know, if you were as a Marine here, you know, compare that, you know, in this particular instance, for when you were in Benghazi, what was the differences, I guess is --

Q Would a Marine Security Guard contingent have been beneficial in Benghazi?

A Again, I think that that would cause me to speculate. I know through my experience we didn't have Marines in Benghazi while I was there. Would a DS agent -- and I would always enjoy having -- I'm a Marine. Would I always enjoy Marines being around? Yes. But

that's --

Q Uh-huh.

A It's hard for me to say. I mean, it was -- it's hard for me to say that they would have helped me do my job any better while I was there. They bring a level of comfort that I did miss.

But, again, I'm also not -- I'm also aware that there are certain standards that we expect our Marines to live in. As I was a young Marine, I expected to live in a certain way, and those things were just not in Benghazi at the time.

Q And what are some of those things?

A Housing. I mean, housing is a big thing. You know, access to, you know, a gym facility, access to some of those creature comforts that we all enjoy. And then also, you know, the security infrastructure, as well. So, you know, locks and alarms, things that we train Marines to monitor were absent during the time I was in Benghazi.

But there are other posts where they -- not Marines, you know. So, in my experience, it's not uncommon to go to a place where there's not Marines at an embassy or diplomatic facility.

Q You also mentioned earlier that you were able to move fairly freely around the city during the daytime but you generally did not do night moves. Is that correct?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. And what was the increased security risk that was there during the nighttime that wasn't present during the day or was

exacerbated at night?

A As I sit here, I can't recall any particular instances why I would say we shouldn't travel at night. I know from my experience serving overseas that things kind of happen at night that don't happen during the day because people are -- "people" I'm saying -- our adversaries, for lack of a better term, are able to move freely under the cover of darkness. So, as a general precaution, not isolated only to Benghazi, I have become accustomed with us reducing our movement at night in places such as that.

And, again, I think it's important that we didn't have police to rely on. We didn't have some -- there wasn't, you know, any formidable security force there. We were dealing with 17th -- we were working with the 17th February guys, but, again, you know, we don't want to extend, you know, their resources to do things at night where we can't always, you know, be certain what's out there. I guess things happen at night that -- and it happens here in the United States, too.

So I think that we generally, as a precaution in Benghazi, wanted to remain off the roads unless for a very good reason. And there were times where we went, you know, to places within Benghazi at night. But, as a general precaution, we stayed off the roads at night.

Q After the attack in Benghazi in September of 2011 and outside of the Accountability Review Board, did anybody within DS come and talk to you about your experience in Benghazi, any recommendations you had, sort of an after-action or lessons-learned?

A Did somebody come to me and ask me --

Q Uh-huh.

A I spoke with -- I was requested to speak to the FBI and to our Protective Intelligence about the attack. And that was about the attack, and I think that was from an investigative standpoint.

Q Okay. But that was limited to the attack?

A Again, I can't recall the question-and-answer session I had with both, but it was related to the attack. Maybe -- I know I was -- I provided some level of, kind of, on-the-ground knowledge when I was talked to by both entities, what this was, what that was, during my time.

But, you know, I was several months removed from being there. So I tried to give them some type of, you know, maybe more of a consultant as to what I saw when I was there. This was where this building was, this was where this building was, type of a conversation I had with both.

Q Were you reviewing video, or were you looking at aerial photos? Or what type of -- any other information, when you say they were giving you some overview background information?

A I'm cognizant there's investigations. I'm not --

Q Uh-huh.

A I did review video of the attack that night.

Q Okay.

A And that was with Diplomatic Security I reviewed that video.

Q With Diplomatic Security?

A Yes, ma'am. Protective Intelligence is part of Diplomatic

Security, so I did review the video with them.

Q Okay. And do you recall who was in the room at the time?

A I recall being in the room with one of the DS agents I served with there, [REDACTED] and maybe one or two DS PII agents. I can't recall the name, who I reviewed the tape with.

Q Okay. But, again, that was related to the attack?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay.

Were you ever questioned by anybody within DS or within the State Department, and, again, outside of the Accountability Review Board, regarding the physical security or staffing issues in Benghazi?

A No, ma'am. I mean, I spoke to the High-Threat Protections Director, Bill Miller. This was after the ARB. And I sought that, I sought that out, just to talk to him, to let him know that if, you know -- that I was on the ground in Benghazi. But that's the only other conversation that I can recall having outside of the ARB and outside of the two investigations.

Q And can you describe that conversation with Bill Miller? I mean, was it just your offer of future assistance, or did you actually discuss substantive issues?

A Ma'am, I can't recall the exact discussion that we had. But I would say that now-Director Miller opened his office to talk to me about my time and experience in Benghazi.

Q Okay. And you sought that out?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. And do you recall, just ballpark, how long that was? Was it a 10-minute conversation? A 30-minute conversation? A half-day conversation?

A I can't recall the length. It was certainly -- he provided me ample amount of time to discuss whatever I wanted to discuss.

Q Uh-huh.

A And I was appreciative for being there.

Q But, again, I mean, was it a half-day?

A No, ma'am.

Q Okay. Less than that.

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Something less than that.

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay.

To your knowledge, did other agents have a similar discussion with Mr. Miller?

A I'm unaware of any of that.

Q Okay.

Now, you spoke to the Accountability Review Board.

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. Did they seek you out, or did you seek them out?

A I sought them out.

Q Okay. And do you recall why you did that?

A Similar to the request for volunteers to go to Benghazi, there was a department-wide message describing the Accountability

Review Board and that they were seeking people who had information or -- I believe that's what it was -- that had information related to Benghazi. And I requested an appearance in front of the ARB.

Q Had you provided any documents prior to your appearance before the ARB?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. And was that in that same request that came out, a request to gather any relevant documents?

A Ma'am, I recall there being several requests for documents. I can't recall -- certainly, prior to my appearance, there was a request for documents. And those were afforded -- those were provided to the ARB at the time.

Q How did you actually go -- how did you physically gather those documents? I mean, were they all electronic? Did you have some hard copies? How did you do your search?

A My experience, what I can recall is I sent everything electronically. I don't know if I provided any hard copies of documents because, I mean, everything that I had was electronic-based. So I believe I provided everything electronically.

Q Okay. So most everything was in email form?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q And did you, like, put them in a folder and forward the folder or forward each one individually?

A As I recall, I forwarded both individually or attached many documents to an email and sent it along.

Q Okay.

And can you describe your interview with the ARB? Were you the only agent there? Were there other agents there? How many people questioned you? How many people were in the room? Can you describe that process for us, please?

A I was the only agent in the room. I met with a panel of interagency seniors that was convened. And it was generally similar to this, a question-and-answer period. I was in there for, you know, maybe an hour and a half, and there was an opportunity for me to discuss my experience in Benghazi.

Q And that was fairly close -- that was much closer in time than us sitting here today. Is that correct?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q So it would have been some time between September and December of 2012?

A I believe so.

Q Okay. Well, the report came out December 18.

A Yes, ma'am. Okay.

Q Putting it in a timeline for you.

And would you say that your recollection and recall was much better back then as to all of the events that you've discussed with them as well as things we've asked you about today?

A For me, time has been a killer, trying to recall exactly how I felt, some of the questions about my impressions. I was certainly closer connected to Benghazi events in September, October, November

of 2012 than I am today.

Q Now, you said this group, the panel, was interagency seniors. Can you elaborate on that and further describe who was on the panel?

A Again, the notable person was the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen. Ambassador Pickering was not present. There was a former CIA Executive Service representative and then an outside, I think, outside-of-government expert that was on the panel, as well as the staffers that were present. But those were the main players who asked me questions.

Q Were there any senior-level people from the State Department present?

A I believe there was some -- there was an executive assistant of maybe someone that assisted me in arranging the interview, but I can't recall being asked any questions from them.

Q Uh-huh. Did you review any documents before your appearance before the ARB?

A I reviewed my own documents that I had prior to meeting with the ARB.

Q And these would've been the documents that you had submitted?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay.

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Anything else? Did you review anything else?

A Not at the ARB, no.

Q Okay. Prior to coming here today, did you review any documents?

A I've been -- I've seen some documents. I've had documents to the same documents that I provided to the different requests for information. Those are what I've used to help refresh my memory. But, again, that's the extent of it.

Q Did you see any summary of your conversation with the ARB?

A No, ma'am.

Q You did not see that?

A No.

Q Okay.

When you spoke with the ARB, did they touch upon some of the same things that we've touched upon today?

A Again, the gap of time, but generally around some of the same questions. I believe so. I mean, my experience, I can summarize it as they asked me about my experience there, and they asked generally the same questions that you're asking today.

Q And you felt you were able to be truthful and candid with them about --

A Yes, ma'am.

Q -- your experience?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. And was there anything that they didn't ask you about that you thought they would ask you about?

A There was an opportunity for me to -- at the end for me to discuss anything that they hadn't asked me. I can't recall exactly what that was, but I know that that opportunity was afforded to me, to kind of, you know, discuss anything else that I wanted to say before the panel. I can't pinpoint what it was that I discussed.

Q You believe you did bring up something?

A As I sit here today, I feel like I was able to say what I was needed to say in front of the panel.

Q Well, I think Austin can tell you I'm not adopting their idea, because I have done this in the past, but that is usually my final question.

A Okay.

Q Is there anything that you thought we would ask about today that we have not brought up? Or is there any other topic that you think it would be important for this committee to know, given that, like the ARB, we will be making recommendations down the road?

A The one recommendation that I proposed to the ARB was the creation of an under secretary for diplomatic security. And the reason I provided that recommendation -- I don't have any intimate knowledge of what goes on at the upper echelons of my agency. I think, generally, we are all trying to keep people safe abroad. I just -- I believe that it would elevate security within the Department to a more appropriate level.

I am no expert on what the machinations of leadership within my bureau and within the Department are regarding that creation of that

or if it would give us better access or if it would put us in a better position. But, as I sit here today, I feel that an under secretary for State is the right direction, and it would, in my mind's eye, give us a better position, seat at the table, when we head to future Benghazi.

Ms. Jackson. Okay.

I think that may be all the questions we have, so we'll go off the record.

[Recess.]

RPTR HUMISTON

EDTR ROSEN

[12:20 p.m.]

Mr. Desai. The time is about 12:21.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. DESAI:

Q Special Agent [REDACTED], good afternoon. My name is Ronak Desai. I am one of the counsels with the minority here at the Select Committee. I'm joined here by my colleagues today, Heather Sawyer, Daniel Rebnord, Brent Woolfork and Susanne Sachsman Grooms. And I know you have flown a long way to be here. I also understand that you have [REDACTED] waiting for you back at home. And I just want to say on behalf of the committee, thank you so much for your appearance and thank you so much for your service.

A Thanks.

Q And we will do our best to try to get you out of here as expeditiously as possible.

So in the last hour, I believe you told us that prior to coming to Benghazi, you had been in [REDACTED]. Is that right? Not immediately prior, but prior --

A Yes, correct.

Q -- with some intervening time in between for Arabic language training and some other things. Is that right?

A I was in Benghazi following [REDACTED] but prior to Arabic language training.

Q Right. And [REDACTED], what was your -- I think you were an ARSO. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And just for the purposes of the record, that's an Assistant Regional Security Officer?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And then you then get to Benghazi. And you said you volunteered for that position. Is that correct?

A Correct.

Q And you heard about that position through a department-wide message?

A Yes.

Q And did Benghazi specifically have any particular meaning to you, or resonance that you decided to volunteer for this?

A No.

Q I believe in the last hour or so you described the mission there as an expeditionary mission. Is that right?

A I don't know if I described it, but I -- it's a term that we -- that we did refer to Benghazi as an expeditionary mission. And that wasn't something that I created. That was a term that was used in association with Benghazi.

Q And could you just explain what that term means to you?

A For me, it was going to Benghazi and it being an expeditionary mission was being outside of the normal creature comforts that we enjoyed at other posts. I guess you're going somewhere

where -- you know, going somewhere where no one's gone before, and that's what it was: reintroducing ourselves into Benghazi. Expeditionary mission was kind of that. I think it -- you know, people coined the term, you know, I'm familiar with it from my time in the Marine Corps, expeditionary force, going somewhere that, you know, other forces may or may not be operating in, but most likely not operating in, so going back to a place where there aren't -- where no one else has been for a while.

Q Right. In your personal experience, the fact that a mission is expeditionary or not, does that make it more or less attractive for you to want to go there and serve?

A For me at the time?

Q Yes.

A It made it attractive for me to want to serve there, but it being Benghazi or it being another place, what would -- that may have been -- again, I didn't -- in the broadcast, I don't know what it -- you know, what the description of Benghazi or if it was -- it could have been an announcement to go to Tripoli, and Benghazi was the place that I ended up, but being in that area of operations did attract me to volunteer for the job.

Q And you arrived in Benghazi on or about February 1.

A Yes.

Q Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And your title there then was RSO?

A I'm going to say yes. We assumed the title of the Regional Security Officer. Whether or not that was formally designated an RSO position, I'm not quite sure.

Q And your predecessor was still there for a few days?

A Yes.

Q Mr. [REDACTED]? Is that your predecessor --

A Yes.

Q -- [REDACTED]? And you arrive on or about February 1. And just provide briefly some background. You know, as the RSO of Benghazi or anywhere, what are your primary responsibilities?

A Broadly?

Q Yes.

A My responsibilities is to provide a safe and secure environment for the conduct of our foreign policy. Now, breaking that down, it's, you know, to ensure that the office spaces that we live in, the places that we live -- the office spaces that we work in, the places that we reside are an environment of -- you know, there is relative safety behind, you know, certain security measures. And we try to create that sense of normalcy as best we can so that people aren't -- don't have, you know -- they're not walking around with flak jackets and helmets on. That's -- you try to create that sense of security.

Q And as the RSO, are you effectively the primary individual responsible for security at that place?

A In Benghazi --

Q Yes.

A -- I viewed myself as the primary adviser for law enforcement and security to the principal officer in eastern Libya, in Benghazi.

Q And you arrived on or about February 1. Do you recall when you departed Benghazi?

A My departure was just short of 60 days. March 27 or 28.

Q I think at a certain point, you actually extended your tour of duty there. Is that right?

A That's correct.

Q Okay. If you can provide me with some insight into the reporting structure as the RSO. So you arrive into Benghazi. Who do you report to, if anyone, at Benghazi? Let's start there.

A Okay. For -- for Mission Benghazi, I reported to Diplomatic Security/International Programs, which I mentioned before, the desk officer, [REDACTED] and the regional director, [REDACTED]. I also reported to the regional security officer in Tripoli, [REDACTED].

Now, I don't know if that's something I created or if it was passed down to me, but that's who I would make sure that I informed of what I was doing out there.

Q Okay. So in Tripoli, it would have been, you said, [REDACTED], who was the RSO there.

A Uh-huh.

Q And then sort of beyond Tripoli or outside of Tripoli, [REDACTED]

██████████, who was, you said, the desk officer?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And then also ██████████?

A Uh-huh.

Q Am I pronouncing that correctly?

A Yeah.

Q Okay. Did you ever interact with anyone outside of DS or outside of this structure that you just told me about?

A Could you explain "interact"?

Q Sure. If there was ever an incidence, whether it was someone outside of DS or not one of these three gentlemen that you just identified, was there, you know, contact, interact, communicate with about your responsibility as an RSO?

A I guess I -- maybe a little firm -- another -- maybe some more clarification. I mean, I talked to people as part of my job, so --

Q Beyond these three.

A Beyond these -- absolutely. Sure.

Q And if you ever felt like you needed to talk to anyone about your responsibilities beyond these three gentlemen, you felt comfortable and free to do so?

A Absolutely.

Q Now, in the last hour or so, my colleagues from the majority discussed with you staffing shortages --

A Okay.

Q -- in Benghazi. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And I think one of the things that came out of that discussion was that the staffing levels during your tenure as RSO fluctuated between a different number of agents. Is that right?

A Correct.

Q The thing that I'd like to discuss with you is some of the reasons behind that fluctuation, and one thing specifically that I want to talk to you about are visa issues, and whether or not difficulties surrounding visas or obtaining visas for agents that were supposed to be on the ground actually caused delays and ultimately shortages.

A During my time, I can think of at least one occasion, two occasions where visas were an issue.

Q An issue in what way?

A Delayed agents' arrival to post; and post being Benghazi.

Q And the two occasions that you do recall, can you tell me about those?

A I can't tell you who the -- there was one agent the last name [REDACTED]. I don't recall his first name. He was identified to come to post, and for some reason, visa-related, he didn't end up showing up.

Q He didn't show up at all or his arrival was delayed?

A He never -- he never arrived. I don't know -- to be clear, I don't know if that was the only reason why he didn't arrive. I know a visa issue was associated with [REDACTED].

I said two occasions. I believe the -- my successor, [REDACTED]

██████████, also incurred visa issues, but I can't be completely accurate.

Q So Mr. ██████████ and Mr. -- and Ms. ██████████. Is that right, Ms. ██████████?

A Yes. ██████████.

Q And did she ultimately ever arrive that you're aware of?

A ██████████ arrived. At what point, I'm not sure.

Q But her arrival wasn't delayed. Is that right?

A I would like to, you know, I think, for the record to make it a little more clear. I know that ██████████ didn't show up because of a visa issue. I think I'm speculating there that ██████████ didn't show up because of the visa issue, so I'd like to make sure that that's -- that that's either clarified that I'm not quite sure if ██████████ was a visa issue.

I know that ██████████ wasn't -- didn't arrive because of a visa issue and maybe another issue that compounded that.

Q And who ultimately, at that time, is responsible for issuing visas to individuals like Mr. ██████████ and Ms. ██████████?

A From my experience, the process is I send my passport, diplomatic passport to the State Department, and the State Department then works with the government, at that time, the government of Libya, to issue a visa to enter the country.

Q So it's the government of Libya that ultimately issues the visa to these individuals that are trying to come?

A Yes.

Q And the sole responsibility lies with the Libyan Government. Is that right?

A That's my understanding.

Q And what steps, if any, could U.S. officials, either in Libya or back in D.C. or elsewhere, take to help expedite that process?

A It's been my experience that when there is an issue with a visa for a person on a diplomatic assignment, that American personnel and inside the country, we'll say Libya, for instance, can bring this to the attention of the gov- -- their counterparts inside of Libya. Say, we have -- [REDACTED] has a visa issue. Whether or not that was done, I can't recall, but it's been my experience that's -- traditionally if -- where there's a visa issue, post can bring that up to the government, their counterparts inside the country.

Q And do you recall if your American colleagues did -- you know, supported these efforts to help expedite the issuance of these visas so you could get the staffing levels up to where you wanted them to be?

A I can't recall the conversations that may have transpired regarding visa issues.

Q And do you recall how big of a problem the visa issue was generally, in your experience?

A Right. Certainly. I mean, if I remember that [REDACTED] had a visa issue, it must be something that stuck in my head. I don't know quite certain whether or not, you know, it was a huge deal that affected many people or just [REDACTED] particular arrival to Benghazi, but it

does -- when you said visa issue, I immediately thought of, you know -- of a person that was selected to come that didn't arrive because of a visa issue.

Q Another topic that we discussed briefly in the last session focused on physical security upgrades. And the picture that emerges from the conversation that you had with my colleagues on the majority as well as some documents that I reviewed is that you arrived at Benghazi and, you know, you had some concerns about how hard Benghazi's security posture was, and that you worked pretty diligently and pretty hard to take existing requests for physical security upgrades that you had inherited from your predecessor or predecessors as well as generating your own to address some of these concerns. Is that right? Is that a fair representation?

A When you said -- when you described it as hard, could you maybe elaborate? Hard -- when we say hard, it's -- we describe things as soft and hard targets, so soft being a -- you know, a more vulnerable place to attack and a hard target being something, you know, more fortified.

Could you just maybe restate what you --

Q Right. So would it would be fair to say that when you came to Benghazi, one of your objectives was to make Mission Benghazi harder, as the way you just described it?

A Yes.

Q To make it less vulnerable to attack?

A Yes.

Q And one way that you wanted to do that was by making certain physical security improvements to Mission Benghazi. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And we talked, I think, in the last session about what some of those were with respect to obtaining funding and then in terms of completing them. So it sounds like -- you had mentioned drop arms. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q And do you recall if the drop arms were funded and completed? Is that your recollection?

A Yes. I was able to -- we had two drop arms in place in Benghazi while I was there.

Q And then you mentioned the temporary perimeter fence as well. And you recall that you had obtained funding and that -- maybe even started construction on that project as well?

A That's correct.

Q And do you recall guard booths being requested, funded, and ultimately completed while you were there?

A The guard booths were requested, they were funded. There were issues with the construction, the fabrication of the guard booths. I wasn't happy with their construction. And, again, I identified that problem with the local contractor and left that work to be completed after I departed.

Q Now, part of the -- of getting these physical security improvements made was obtaining funding?

A Yes.

Q And one of the things that, again, you discussed in last session was that funding was sometimes delayed, that you were somewhat frustrated with the pace of funding in order to complete some of these projects that you had both inherited and that you had requested get completed. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And with respect to the funding, it was specifically the pace of funding. Is that right? So if I understood your conversation with my colleagues on the majority during the last session, the funding would come, it would just take a long time for that funding to arrive in order to complete the projects. Is that correct?

A I think it's fair to say that I was frustrated in the delays of me identifying projects, requesting funding and that -- for that money to come to me to spend, yes.

Q Right. And despite those delays, I think you said that you created solutions with the guys in D.C. to still complete some of these requests and projects that you had in mind. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And can you just elaborate on some of these solutions that you created with the folks back in Washington or other relevant places?

A I think we -- in the previous session, I explained the process about the fence, and I -- unless you want me to go into the fence again, if that's what you're asking. You know, I identified the problem with the restriction for improving the wall height. There was

an obstacle to overcome, and we -- when I say "obstacle," a funding challenge, right, that they weren't -- they wanted us to -- the expectation was to ask the landlord to improve the wall. That wasn't going to happen. When I say, "that wasn't going to happen," the landlord wasn't going to improve the wall. We're asking a landlord to go into his pockets to build a wall, and that just -- that conversation didn't get started.

So, we identified a solution to build the fence. And, again, when I requested it, I worked with DS physical security experts to, let's come up with a solution to, again, impede someone's, you know, access to the facility. And they helped me. I -- again, I found a contractor. I entertained several contractors, because that's the process, you know. The suggestion was, you know, to find contractors to help build this fence. So we worked -- we found a contractor that he was performing the same work in Tripoli, or he was performing physical security upgrades in Tripoli. He came down, gave us a plan, and we started moving. And then that brown -- the ground was broken on that project prior to my departure.

Q And do you recall any other instances where you came up with solutions with DS and folks in D.C. to get projects completed, or at least get started?

A Certainly. I mean, the -- the egress grills on the facilities to escape during a fire, the safe haven, the -- you know, the drop arms, the -- I think the procurement of Jersey, these Jersey-style barriers to, again, improve the setback of the facility.

Money was requested, and it was allocated. That took some time. And I think I've explained my misgivings with the ability of not being able to identify a problem and effect a solution right there. A number of -- I mean, those are the -- other projects that may escape me at the moment.

Q And so you were there from early February to about late March. Would you say that things improved over time with respect to this process in obtaining funding and getting the mission hardened?

A I don't know if the process improved or if I just became comfortable with the process. I was -- you know, I know I have a limited amount of time to make an impact and to keep the -- I wanted to make the place a better place for the people that followed me, you know, and I think that's carried from the people before me to the people after me. We have a common understanding that we want to make sure people are safe. So I don't know if I can say that, you know, things got better. I just became more comfortable with the appropriations and allocation of funds.

Q So through your efforts and your collaboration with folks at DS and D.C. or elsewhere, you felt that you were able to take the existing process and still deliver results for the mission. Is that right?

A I identified a problem. I learned how to work with the contractors. We had a contractor that we'd identify a piece of work, and he would give me a quote. He figured out that I needed a quote, he'd give it to me, we sent it to Washington. They would then send

me monies for that project.

Q So if I can at this time, I'm going to show you one or two documents just to help guide our discussion --

A Okay.

Q -- and maybe refresh your memory on some of these issues. I will mark as Exhibit 1 this email between yourself and [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay. I haven't seen this for some time, so it's going to take me --

BY MR. DESAI:

Q No. Please. Take as much time as you need to review.

A Okay.

Q Good to go?

A I think so, yeah.

Q So this is Exhibit 1. Just for the record, this is document number C05393639.

Do you recall this email?

A It looks like something I would -- I drafted, yes.

Q And the subject of this email is, questions for Libya meeting, and this is an email from you to Mr. [REDACTED] with some others cc'd, dated from March the 6th. And what it looks like in this email is Mr. [REDACTED] has written to you to inquire about the status of the drop arms bars in Benghazi. You reply a short while later. You provide that status update. You write, I think in the first paragraph

here, good evening, [REDACTED]. The drop arms are near completion. You then discuss how you'd like to perhaps re-program some funding from this project to another.

And if I can just direct your attention to the fourth paragraph in that document where you've written, we are extremely pleased with the recent funding decision of our temporary fence -- for our temporary fence. Couple that with sandbag deployment, safe haven door fabrication, and emergency egresses on the windows, Benghazi is rapidly finding a sense of security.

A Okay.

Q If I can just ask you about that briefly. So it looks like you've mentioned here the funding decision for the fence, the sandbag deployment, safe haven door fabrication, emergency egresses on the windows, and these are some of the things that you just told me about a few moments ago. You conclude that sentence by writing, "Benghazi is rapidly finding a sense of security."

If you could just tell me, if you recall, what you meant by that in this context, given your experience at the mission at the time.

A It would be difficult for me to recall what exactly I meant when I made this statement. It could be, you know -- if I start from the beginning of this sentence, I can tell you I was happy that we had found a solution to the wall. When we -- and when I say "we," that I agreed with working on this with the physical security experts in International Programs.

I'm also probably pat -- I can tell you I'm patting my team on

the back here by doing all of these things to improve the situation we were in out there. And I think that has something to do with me suggesting Benghazi -- probably should have maybe wrote Special Mission Benghazi. I'm not quite certain what I felt and meant by that last part of the sentence there, but I was, you know, proud of the team that I had out there. And I think that has a lot to go with some of the improvements that were on -- that we made, again, with this -- you know, we wanted to set -- this is a couple of weeks before I departed. You know, I wanted to make sure that we did -- we made meaningful -- you know, we took meaningful efforts to make the place a little bit better than we may have found it. And that's what we all can expect, given that there's a lot of things going on in Benghazi and, you know, things always kind of detract you from, you know, what you set out for the day to do.

I don't know if that's a good answer for that, but that's what I can provide.

Q Did you find that when you would make these funding requests and you were trying to find solutions, as you just identified, that for the most part, the folks at DS back in D.C. were receptive to your -- when there were concerns or requests or your desire to work with your team to make things better?

A I think the people that I worked with, [REDACTED] and it looks like, you know, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] he goes by, were receptive to the requests that I provided. And they had an understanding -- they had a better understanding, a more informed

understanding of what was done previous to me being there and during my time there. Of course, that's my assumption right now. We go into their thinking, you know, that there's a strategic level of thinking that -- we're there on the ground, we're going to handle these tactical decisions, but folks that are above us, you know, generally make decisions for us. They really have an informed opinion, and it carries a lot of water.

So I had faith and confidence in my -- my leadership and the folks that I was dealing with here to help us find solutions and fund those solutions, because they knew that it was a tight spot we were in, you know. We wanted -- everybody wanted to make the place better.

Q And you mentioned just a few minutes ago that, you know, part of this email perhaps and the sentiment behind it was that you were patting your team on the back that they had done a good job and had worked fairly assiduously to make things better and safer.

And if I can just show you another document that I will mark as Exhibit 2.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 2

Was marked for identification.]

Mr. [REDACTED] Okay.

BY MR. DESAI:

Q Great. So Exhibit 2 carries with it a document ID number of C05393467. And this is an email that originally is dated, looks like, March 8, 2012, with subject line, "Meritorious honor award for U.S. Mission Benghazi." And you've written here to Mr. [REDACTED]

██████████ -- pronounce that correctly still?

A Uh-huh.

Q "Sir, I'd like to nominate my team for a group meritorious honor award. They've done a heck of a job working long hours to improve the physical security of post, stand up a new local guard force, and create continuity in programs (turnover binders, establishing written doctrine, how much each program works) which has previously been absent."

And then you go on to say later on, I'm now on the -- page 4 of the document, "Our big push here has been to make life better for the TDY agents that follow us. I believe that we have done an incredible job doing just that while also creating a safer environment for those who work here."

So this email that you write appears to reflect what you just told me a few moments ago, that you were, you know, quite pleased with the work that your team had done in improving physical security of the mission, and that given the circumstances, you guys had made things a lot better than where they were at least when you came to Benghazi. Is that fair?

A In the -- when I'm drafting this, yes. I think, you know, when I read through this, this exhibit here, it is a little troubling, because I'm patting -- patting myself and my team on the back for -- and there's a loss of life, you know, after -- several months after this, and I think it's, you know -- you know, I think we all reflect on, you know, after the incident, you know. I'm asking for an award for my

team, and, you know, it's kind of -- brings a level of, you know, dissatisfaction to know that people lost their life, you know, and friends were injured.

So I just wanted to, you know, suggest that, you know, it is difficult to read about a -- you know, an award that I put my team up for, and, you know, several months later, somebody was -- people were killed, you know, that we were charged to protect, so -- but in this email, yes, you know, I'm looking for recognition for my team for doing a good job.

Q And at the time, again, based on where physical security was through your efforts and the efforts of those you collaborated with at DS and elsewhere, things had improved, relatively speaking, from when you had arrived, correct?

A We made an earnest push to get things done, to make the place -- like, create a safer environment for those who worked there and overcoming, you know, some obstacles along the way, funding and others, to make it, you know, a relatively safe place to be. Benghazi was a tough, tough place to be at, you know, post-war. And that's what I'm asking for -- that's what I'm, you know, suggesting in this.

Q So this gets forwarded on. There's some email traffic, I think Mr. [REDACTED] -- I'm back on page 1 now.

A Okay.

Q -- on March 9 said, send it right up. I'll submit it.

And then a few weeks later, it looks like on March 23rd, 2012, you write back to Mr. [REDACTED], saying, "Good morning, sir. Looks

like [REDACTED] will be here just in time."

And then down a few lines and at the last paragraph, "It's been a good ride and one that I learned a tremendous amount from. I appreciate IP support and look forward to joining the NEA team next year when I head to Cairo as an ARSO 1."

Who's [REDACTED] that you mentioned in the first line here?

A [REDACTED], the RSO in Tripoli.

Q Okay. And this was Friday, March 23 that you wrote this, so this was just a couple days or a few days before you left Benghazi. Is that right?

A Correct.

Q And this last line when you say, "It's been a good ride and one that I learned a tremendous amount from," can you just elaborate on that a bit, if you can recall?

A I can't recall exactly what I'm referring to, but, I mean, I'm comfortable with saying that, you know, my experience in Benghazi was career enhancing and I think, you know, that I learned -- again, what exactly it's, you know, saying there is that I learned a tremendous amount from it, it's going to carry -- it's going to help me be a better agent and help me make decisions as I further my career with Diplomatic Security.

Q And the -- you write, "I appreciate IP support."

Remind me who IP is again?

A International Programs, and that's [REDACTED] -- that's [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was the regional director for NEA International Programs.

Q Okay. And the support you were referring to that you appreciated, do you recall what that was?

A I mean, it's from the entire time that I was there.

Q I see.

A Things that we've already talked about, you know, funding support, finding, you know, solutions to obstacles. That's the type of support that I'm referring to.

Q Okay. Great. And just returning sort of more broadly to staffing shortages and physical security sort of together, and I think in the last session, my colleagues had asked you if you felt comfortable going to your superiors with any concerns that you had or whether you felt comfortable asking for physical improvements or for funding for them, and you indicated that you were. Is that right?

A I was comfortable, absolutely, asking for help.

Q Did you ever feel like during your time in Benghazi from February to the end of March that you could not be totally forthcoming and honest in your opinions to your superiors about the mission's physical security or anything else?

A I don't recall feeling that way.

Q Do you recall if anyone ever discouraged your advocacy efforts to improve the mission's physical security through upgrade requests?

A If someone at the -- within DS or at the mission discouraged my --

Q Your superiors or anybody.

A Discouraged me from improving the physical security.

Q Discouraged your efforts, right? So as we talked about, you were pretty assertive and resourceful in creating solutions to getting things done. At any point during your time in Benghazi, did anyone discourage you from doing that?

A Not that I recall.

Q And were you ever told by anyone, superiors or otherwise, about keeping your mouth shut about Mission Benghazi's physical security or the staffing shortages that were afflicting the post?

A No.

Q And did anyone at any point, either directly or indirectly, indicate to you that you would suffer consequences or penalization or repercussions of any kind for expressing any of your concerns with respect to the shortages or the physical security of the mission?

A No.

Q And did anyone ever tell you that you shouldn't rock the boat, or not make waves, and that you should just keep to yourself and not express your opinions to anyone about staffing shortages or physical security?

A No.

Q Do you recall if you ever faced retaliation or adverse employment consequences by expressing your concerns and being so resourceful in creating solutions with the guys in DS to make the mission safer?

A No.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q And let me just ask with regard to that, I know that you hesitated around the note about the commendation. And certainly I think, you know, from our perspective, what that showed was what you've described, kind of this atmosphere of a very earnest effort by people, both on the ground and sounds like people you were working with.

Kind of to the flip side of what my colleague was asking is it sounds like certainly at least you felt with regard to your colleagues that they should be commended for their very sincere efforts to harden the security posture.

Did you feel like your efforts were similarly recognized by your superiors, not necessarily by commendation, but that they appreciated your efforts to do all that you could to work with them to harden the posture?

A I believe that my -- as it's stated in the email, that International Programs was appreciative of our efforts, and that's why they went ahead and awarded all of us, they gave us an award for our efforts out there. I don't know if that's customary for the folks before me or after me. I know that they applauded our efforts in such a way of giving us a group award for what we did out there.

You know, as I stated before, as we reflect on it now, it does seem -- you know, it does bring a bit of discomfort knowing that I was awarded for something that, you know, people ended up losing their lives and getting seriously injured for, but I guess at the time, it seemed that we had made improvements to our posture out there, security

posture.

Q And both your efforts and the people who surrounded you, you felt like, I think you described it as, you know, as earnest push to get things done. And did you feel like that was just a shared commitment up the chain -- so it sounds like most of your interaction was with [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] -- a shared commitment to kind of earnest effort and push to get things done?

A I would -- I certainly -- every email or every phone call was answered, so I believe that everyone had a shared commitment in keeping people safe in Benghazi, most certainly in Diplomatic Security.

BY MR. DESAI:

Q So I'm going to switch focus again. And you had a pretty exhaustive discussion, again, in the last session about the QRF and the 17 February militia. And just for the record, what does QRF stand for?

A Quick Reaction Force.

Q And what relationship, just to provide, again, a brief background, does the QRF have to the 17 Feb militia? What's the difference between those two things?

A They're one and the same. We just -- we used it interchangeably. And Quick Reaction Force, we -- was made up -- comprised of the 17 February guys.

Q I see. And based on your discussion in the last session, it sounded, and please correct me if I'm wrong, that you were fairly positive on the QRF with respect to the role that they played in

supporting the security of Mission Benghazi. Is that right?

A I was happy to have them, to have extra guys on the compound to help us in security situations.

Q And one of the things that you said was, We could not have gotten done what we needed to get done without these guys. And could you just elaborate on what you meant by that specifically in terms of the things that the mission needed to get done and the role that 17 Feb played in fulfilling that role?

A Previously I think the -- when the question was asked, you know, that we needed them to get things done, was -- I was referring to the building of some of these field-expedient measures that we used out there, the egress windows. I used the 17 February guys to help me find someone to build these temporary measures, or field-expedient measures.

They also -- you know, they're local, so they can give -- they pick up on things that you certainly, being an American in eastern Libya, are not going to pick up on. So they were, you know, instrumental members of our team out in Benghazi.

Q And so you've mentioned construction, some other things, physically on the mission. I think in the last session also, you had referenced a security incident where some other forces had, I think, approached the Mission Benghazi gate, and you had said it was the QRF that had ultimately come and resolved that. Is that right, from what you recall?

A The QRF was on compound with us, so they responded to, you

know, and conversed with this group that was outside our gate. They both identified each other, and that's how they de-escalated the situation. That's -- I mean, that was a perfect example of how they provided assistance to us.

Q And the fact that they live on the compound that's inside the compound walls, that indicates a certain level of trust with these guys that the mission would actually have them onsite. Is that right?

A When I took over as the temporary duty RSO, they were living on compound. Their mission was explained to me. I didn't see any reason to take them off of -- you know, ask them to remove -- ask to remove them from the compound. For my level of comfort, I made sure that these individuals -- we did necessary background checks on them, so I knew who was working for me, so that -- I mean, there was no reason for me at the time to remove them, and I didn't have any discomfort with them initially being on the compound.

Q I see. And when an incident happens, as the one that you had referenced previously, they respond, is that standard protocol or practice that if there is an incident of some sort, that it's QRF that is alerted, in some capacity, to arrive at the scene and provide assistance?

A In Benghazi, that's what we -- that's how we -- that's what we worked with in Benghazi, that was our -- you know, part of our approach to investigating or mitigating a situation.

Q And during your time there, that process worked well, the one that you described?

A Yes.

Q Did you have confidence while you were there that they would respond as required when something would happen, that if you were to call them, they would be there?

A They proved that they would show up when I needed them to, so I didn't have any reason to doubt that they would be helpful.

Q And is there a difference between internal and external February 17th militia, the QRF on the one hand that, you know, we've been talking about, versus other folks?

A Again, it was my understanding that they were part of the same group; just, we had four to five guys that lived with us on the facility. They were a subordinate force to the larger 17th February Brigade.

Q Okay. And just the reason I ask that is we've heard 17 Feb be described as a larger umbrella organization, if you will, comprised of different militias. Is that a fair characterization based on your experience there and what you knew about them while you served in Benghazi?

A I don't know the composition of 17 Feb, and I can't recall if I ever did know the composition. I know that they were the largest or most powerful militia in eastern Libya, to include Benghazi, while I was there, and during my time there.

Q So let's switch gears again. You indicated in the last session support for Under Secretary of Diplomatic Security. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q And are you aware of the independent panel on best practices that was formed in response to one of the recommendations enumerated by the Accountability Review Board?

A Vaguely familiar. ^{I've} ~~I've~~ been away from -- from this for a while, but I do know some of what was -- what came out of that.

Q Right. So the Independent Best Practices Panel was formed as a result of this recommendation by the ARB. It's five members, chaired by former Secret Service Director Mark Sullivan. The five members of the panel have, I think it's something like 168 years of collective security experience.

One of the members of the panel is Todd Keil, who was in Diplomatic Security in various capacities for 25-plus years. Are you familiar with him or know him at all?

A No, I don't know him.

Q So the panel put out a number of recommendations in its August 2013 report, and one of these recommendations was the creation of an Under Secretary for Diplomatic Security. And the Department, at this time, has not accepted it, and one of the concerns that they have surrounding the creation of such a position is that it would further exacerbate existing stovepiping or isolation of DS within the larger State Department organization. And I just wanted to see if you had any thoughts on that or if, you know, you would find that to be a reasonable concern, given the way the Department was operating prior.

A When I spoke to the ARB about the creation of an Under

Secretary, again, I am absent any knowledge on what actually occurs at, you know, the upper echelons of my organization. I felt it would -- the creation of an Under Secretary for Diplomatic Security would elevate, you know, the security and law enforcement arm, branch of the Department of State to a position where they had direct access to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary.

When we look across the board at other -- I'm basing this off of just my very, very vague knowledge of maybe the Department of Defense, or within our organization, you have several Under Secretaries for political affairs, from other -- for other bureaus, if you will, and other disciplines. And, of course, I'm home team guy, I wanted to see the best for our organization, which -- and elevate the life safety, security of our personnel, who serve in really, really tough situations overseas to an appropriate position within the Department.

That's where I was -- that's where the suggestion came from. Irregardless of what actually occurs, I wanted to make sure that we -- that people remain safe overseas, and that I thought by offering that as a recommendation would appropriately elevate Diplomatic Security in the grand scheme of things in the operation of the Department.

Q Okay. And turning to the ARB, so you had mentioned that you had, in fact, spoken with them --

Ms. Sawyer. Can I ask a question about that?

Mr. Desai. Sure. Please.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q One of the things that did happen, and on the timing, I'm not sure if it was after the Accountability Review Board, or if State had affirmatively done, it was to kind of have an Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security, who the current person serving in that position is Greg Starr. He testified at a public hearing before the committee about the rationale for creating his position being to assure direct access to kind of those upper echelons you're talking about, including the Secretary, and talked about his relationship with the current Secretary, Secretary Kerry, as being very favorable in granting direct access.

If that was the kind of solution to get, it sounded like your concern was direct access and a seat at the table, would you feel that that would kind of address some of the concerns that you had had, that seat at the table?

A Ma'am, I'm a bit confused.

Q It's a very long question.

A The Assistant Secretary position existed before the ARB. I mean, Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security has always been -- as long as my tenure with the Department, there's always been that. Maybe somebody else?

Q Yeah. I think there was a new reporting relationship created. It's not -- I misspoke by saying the title --

A Okay.

Q -- but a reporting relationship to allow that person to have more direct access. So I think that was the sense of getting the seat

at the table.

A Okay.

Q So maybe what I'm trying to get your sense of is whether your concern was -- was one of finding direct access, finding a seat at the table, and less kind of how structurally that was done.

A I may have done a poor job of -- again, I don't -- explaining it before. I don't know what the level of access previous Assistant Secretaries And previous principal Deputy Assistant Secretaries, the director of our service have had with the different bureaus or with the Deputy Secretary or with -- the Deputy Secretaries or with the Secretary.

I was purely making my recommendation based on what I thought was occurring or what I think the creation of that position would mean for my bureau. So, again, I'm only speaking to what I think would be best, and from a very -- you know, a guy that's been on, you know, 9 years-plus with the Department, with Diplomatic Security.

Q And that end goal, really, from your perspective, is the seat at the table, getting the access that you think Diplomatic Security needs and deserves?

A I chose the term "seat at the table," I think, but I would be -- I don't know if I'm comfortable saying that my seniors should have a seat at the table. I think that -- I think that having an Under Secretary, again, would elevate it to the other Under Secretaries and make it just a little bit -- make it more of a priority for the Department, safety and security of our diplomats and family members.

BY MR. DESAI:

Q Great. So with respect to the Accountability Review Board, you didn't talk to them, you sought out the appearance. Is that right?

A I did seek out the appearance.

Q And did you feel as if you were provided the opportunity to share all the information you deemed pertinent, based on your experience and based on their work?

A Yes.

Q And did you feel like you were fully forthcoming and were able to be fully forthcoming with the ARB?

A I felt that I was able to discuss everything I needed to discuss about my experience there in Benghazi.

Q So there are a couple of just very brief allegations that have been put out there with respect to the ARB that I want to ask you about --

A Okay.

Q -- and just dispense with.

Were you ever asked or ordered not to provide information to the ARB?

A No.

Q Were you ever asked or ordered to conceal or destroy information from the ARB?

A No.

Q If I can just refocus your attention now onto some of the ARB's findings and recommendations. And I think, as was pointed out

in the last session, some of the issues that we've discussed in our conversation today were also identified by the ARB in their report, which was issued in December 2012.

Have you had an opportunity to read the ARB report?

A I read the unclassified version of the ARB report.

Q Okay. So just the unclassified?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And in general, did you feel that the report accurately captured your experience at Mission Benghazi?

A I don't believe that it was a verbatim explanation of my experience there. I did take -- I don't know if "pride" is the right term, but there were things that I suggested as a best practice or a recommendation to the panel that ultimately ended up in the report.

Q Do you recall what some of those things were that ultimately were reflected in the report that you provided to the panel?

A I -- training was one of them, training, not necessarily Diplomatic Security agent training, but the training between DS agents, DS personnel with the Foreign Service Officers specialists that we serve with abroad. There seemed to be, you know, I think, misunderstandings on both sides as to what our collective missions are overseas, and I thought that improving opportunities for training prior to getting in those situations would be beneficial to all of us.

Q Was there anything else besides training that you can recall that you told the board that was ultimately reflected in the report?

A There were several, but, you know, without looking at it

right now, I couldn't go through which ones I thought were -- that I hit in my explanation to the panel.

Q Okay. Great. So if I can turn to the ARB's findings on staffing shortages and other specifics. I'll just read --

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Yeah. Actually --

Mr. Desai. Go ahead.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q -- could I just ask you a quick question about, you had indicated in the last hour that you had reached out -- you had gotten the notice that the ARB, the Accountability Review Board, would be stood up, and you reached out affirmatively to them to share your experience.

Did you get any sense when you did reach out to them that they were not interested in speaking with you or other DS agents?

A I don't recall having that feeling. There was a process to undertake. You would -- I responded to the notice and I was called back. My understanding was that they felt that it was necessary to speak to me because of my experience there and my role there. I didn't have any issues getting in front of the ARB.

Q So no one, certainly from the ARB, indicate -- because I know my colleague asked you about whether you had been discouraged, but no one from the ARB ever indicated to you that the ARB did not want to hear from you?

A No.

Q It was just the process of getting it scheduled --

A Sure. Sure.

Q -- after you had contacted them?

A Yes.

Q Did you hear from any of your other colleagues, DS agent colleagues, that they had reached out to the AR -- the Accountability Review Board, but that the Accountability Review Board had refused to speak with them?

A I can't recall any instances where somebody reached out and was not offered an opportunity. On the contrary, I know agents that served before me and after me that talked to the ARB. Now, whether or not they sought out that opportunity or the ARB sought them out, I'm not certain, but I know that there are other DS agents that of course spoke to the ARB.

Ms. Sawyer. We'll go off the record just for a sec.

[Recess.]

RPTR KERR

EDTR HOFSTAD

[1:26 p.m.]

Mr. Desai. Let's go back on the record. The time is 1:26 p.m.

BY MR. DESAI:

Q So, before we left off, we were briefly discussing the Accountability Review Board and some of their findings and recommendations. And one of the things that they talk about in their report are staffing shortages, and that's, of course, something that we've talked about during our conversation today. The Board, of course, found that staffing shortages were a problem and had enumerated various reasons behind this.

And in order to address some of those issues, the ARB made several recommendations to address this. And the first thing it did is it endorsed the Department's request for increased Diplomatic Security personnel for high- and critical-threat posts, as well as for additional mobile security deployment teams, as well as increase domestic DS staffing in domestic locations as well.

Do you agree with that recommendation generally?

A Yes.

Q And you think it would be helpful?

A Yes.

Q The other thing the ARB recommended in this capacity was: Key policy program and security personnel should be assigned for a minimum of at least 1 year at various posts, and there should be at

least a 120-day minimum for temporary duty, or TDY, assignments across the globe at various posts.

Do you agree with that recommendation, as well?

A Could you be -- the recommendation I'm familiar with, but are we speaking solely with DS or across the board, both the entire Foreign Service family?

Q DS.

A With DS. And the question was, do I agree with -- I think there's two questions in there. Do I agree that key personnel should be there for a year?

Q Uh-huh.

A Yes.

Q That's one, and the second is TDY service --

A For 120 days. I don't have any problems with that recommendation.

Q Okay.

Lastly, from where you sit and given your experience -- and you said you've been at DS for, I think, 9 years. You served in Benghazi for, you know, close to 60 days. And there's been the ARB report, and you spoke at the Accountability Review Board. There's been an independent best practices panel and report. There's been an independent best practices of management panel, as well. We're now the eighth congressional investigation looking into the Benghazi attacks.

Based on your experience and based on where you sit, do you think

there are any other questions that have, you know, been left unanswered in connection with the Benghazi attacks?

A Sir, I don't have an opinion on the matter. I think looking into the events surrounding Benghazi has been a good thing for my agency. How that occurs and what format that occurs in, investigative-wise or otherwise, is unimportant to me. I just think that it's been a good review of our -- because I take it so very seriously. This is my career. And anything that this body or previous bodies can do to improve security and our operations overseas is very important to me.

Ms. Sawyer. And to help us, you know, do that -- because, in part, we're very committed, I think, as a full committee, to make sure that this is indeed the last investigation into the Benghazi attacks -- are there, just from where you sit, and there may not be any, but are there any particular questions that you have that you feel that we should be looking into or that remain unanswered?

Mr. [REDACTED] No, ma'am.

Ms. Sawyer. Okay.

BY MR. DESAI:

Q Very good.

So I'm going to shift gears, and I'm going to ask you a series of questions about several public allegations that have been made with respect to the attack. And it's our understanding that the committee is looking into some of these allegations, or all of these allegations, rather, and, as a result, we are compelled to ask everyone all these

questions.

Just to be very clear, though, even though I'm asking you these questions about these allegations, I don't want you to think that anyone on the minority staff or the minority members believe that these specific allegations have any merit.

What's going to happen is I will describe the allegation to you, I will ask you if you if you have any information or evidence to support any of these allegations, and if you do not, I will move on to the next allegation until we're done.

A Okay.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary of State Clinton intentionally blocked military action on the night of the attacks. One Congressman has speculated that Secretary Clinton told Leon Panetta to stand down and this resulted in the Defense Department not sending more assets to help in Benghazi.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton ordered Secretary of Defense Panetta to stand down on the night of the attacks?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that Secretary of State Clinton issued any kind of order to Secretary of Defense Panetta on the night of the attacks?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April of 2012 cable denying security to Libya. The Washington Post Fact Checker evaluated this claim and gave it four

Pinocchios, its highest award for false claims.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April 2012 cable denying security resources to Libya?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton was personally involved in providing specific instruction on day-to-day security resources in Benghazi?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton misrepresented or fabricated intelligence on the risk posed by Colonel Qadhafi to his own people in order to garner support for military operations in Libya in spring 2011.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary Clinton misrepresented or fabricated intelligence on the risk posed by Colonel Qadhafi to his own people in order to garner support for military operations in Libya in spring 2011?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that the U.S. Mission in Benghazi included transferring weapons to Syrian rebels or to other countries. A bipartisan report issued by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence found that the CIA was not collecting and shipping arms from Libya to Syria, and they found no support for this allegation.

Do you have any evidence to contradict the House Intelligence Committee's bipartisan report finding that the CIA was not shipping arms from Libya to Syria?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that the U.S. facilities in Benghazi were being used to facilitate weapons transfers from Libya to Syria or to any other foreign country?

A No.

Q A team of CIA security personnel was temporarily delayed from departing the annex to assist the Special Mission Compound, and there have been a number of allegations about the cause and appropriateness of that delay.

The House Intelligence Committee issued a bipartisan report concluding that the team was not ordered to stand down but that, instead, there were tactical disagreements on the ground over how quickly to depart.

Do you have any evidence that would contradict the House Intelligence Committee's finding that there was no stand-down order to CIA personnel?

A No.

Q Putting aside whether you personally agree with the decision to delay temporarily or think it was the right decision, do you have any evidence that there was a bad or improper reason behind the temporary delay of the CIA security personnel who departed the annex to assist the Special Mission Compound?

A No.

Q A concern has been raised by one individual that, in the course of producing documents to the Accountability Review Board,

damaging documents may have been removed or scrubbed out of that production.

Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the materials that were provided to the ARB?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department directed anyone else at the State Department to remove or scrub damaging documents from the materials that were provided to the ARB?

A No.

Q Let me ask these questions also for documents that were provided to Congress.

Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the materials that were provided to Congress?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell altered unclassified talking points about the Benghazi attacks for political reasons and that he had then misrepresented his actions when he told Congress that the CIA faithfully performed our duties in accordance with the highest standards of objectivity and nonpartisanship.

Do you have any evidence that CIA Deputy Director Mike Morell gave false or intentionally misleading testimony to Congress about the Benghazi talking points?

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that the CIA Deputy Director Morell altered the talking points provided to Congress for political reasons?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Ambassador Susan Rice made an intentional misrepresentation when she spoke on the Sunday talk shows about the Benghazi attacks.

Do you have any evidence that Ambassador Rice intentionally misrepresented facts about the Benghazi attacks on the Sunday talk shows?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that the President of the United States was virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief on the night of the attacks and that he was missing in action.

Do you have any evidence to support the allegation that the President was virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief or missing in action on the night of the attacks?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that a team of four military personnel at Embassy Tripoli on the night of the attacks who were considering flying on the second plane to Benghazi were ordered by their superiors to stand down, meaning to cease all operations. Military officials have stated that those four individuals were instead ordered to remain in place in Tripoli to provide security and medical assistance in their current location.

A Republican staff report issued by the House Armed Services Committee found that there was no stand-down order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi.

Do you any evidence to contradict the conclusion of the House Armed Services Committee that there was no stand-down order issued to U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi?

A No.

Q It has been alleged that the military failed to deploy assets on the night of the attack that would have saved lives. However, former Republican Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon, the former chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, conducted a review of the attacks, after which he stated, "Given where the troops were, how quickly the thing all happened, and how quickly it dissipated, we probably couldn't have done more than we did."

Do you have any evidence to contradict Chairman McKeon's conclusion?

A No.

Q Do you any evidence that the Pentagon had military assets available to them on the night of the attacks that could have saved lives but that the Pentagon leadership intentionally decide not to deploy?

A No.

Mr. Desai. Do my colleagues have any questions?

I think, with that, we're all done. And, again, thank you so much

for appearing and for your service. We're very grateful.

Mr. [REDACTED] Thank you.

Mr. Desai. We can go off the record.

[Whereupon, at 1:36 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date

Errata Sheet

Select Committee on Benghazi

The witness reviewed the accompanying transcript and certified its accuracy by providing the following corrections. These corrections are reflected in the transcript as identified below.

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>LINE</u>	<u>ALL CORRECTIONS MADE BY WITNESS</u>
10	17	Replaced "security" with "secure."
40	17	Replaced "defense" with "internal defense situations."
41	17	Replaced "DHS" with "DS."
46	2 - 20	Replaced "SFT" with "SST."
93	5	Replaced "I'm" with "I've."