

RPTR MCKENZIE

EDTR SECKMAN

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

INTERVIEW OF: [REDACTED]

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 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:

MARK GRIDER, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

CARLTON DAVIS, INVESTIGATOR

SARA BARRINEAU, INVESTIGATOR

SHERIA CLARKE, COUNSEL

SUSANNE SACHSMAN GROOMS, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR/GENERAL COUNSEL

RONAK DESAI, MINORITY COUNSEL

For the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

AUSTIN EVERS, SENIOR ADVISOR

LAURA DECK, ATTORNEY-ADVISED

Ms. Barrineau. This is a transcribed interview of [REDACTED] [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 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?

Ms. [REDACTED] My full name is [REDACTED].

Ms. Barrineau. Thank you. The committee appreciates your appearance at this interview.

Good morning. My name is Sara Barrineau with the committee's majority staff.

And I will ask everyone else at the table to introduce themselves.

Ms. Clarke. Sheria Clarke with the majority staff.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I'm Susanne Sachsman Grooms from the minority.

Mr. Desai. Ronak Desai with the minority staff.

Mr. Grider. Mark Grider with the majority.

Mr. Davis. I'm Carlton Davis. I work with Mr. Gowdy.

Mr. Evers. Austin Evers, State Department.

Ms. Deck. Laura Deck, State Department.

Ms. Barrineau. Thank you. Before we begin, I would like to go over the ground rules and explain how the interview will proceed. Generally, the way the questioning has proceeded 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. 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 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 encountered in the past, but I want to make sure you are 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 will reserve its answer until we move into a classified setting. And based on my preparation for today, I don't anticipate that. But if you feel like it's classified, let me know, and we will save it. We have space available if we need it.

You are welcome to confer with counsel at any time throughout the interview. But if something 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 would like to take a break whenever it's convenient for you. This can be after every hour of questioning, after a couple of rounds, whatever you prefer.

During a round of questioning, if you need anything -- a glass of water, use of the facilities, or to confer with counsel -- please just let us know, and we will go off the record and stop the clock. We want to make this process as easy and comfortable 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 am going to ask the reporter to please feel free to jump in if you respond nonverbally.

Do you understand?

Ms. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Barrineau. Also, we should both try not to talk over each other so it's easier to get a complete record. We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible. So we will take our time and repeat or clarify our questions, if necessary.

If you have any questions or if you do not understand any of our questions, please just let us know. We will be happy to clarify. And the official reporter should feel free to jump in if you didn't get something, or we are talking over each other.

If you honestly don't know the answer to a question or do not 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 that. And please inform us who to the best of your knowledge may be able to provide a more complete answer to the question.

You are required to answer questions from Congress truthfully. Do you understand that?

Ms. [REDACTED] Yes.

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

Ms. [REDACTED] Yes.

Ms. Barrineau. Witnesses that knowingly provide false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury or for making false statements. I know you understand that, but do you understand that?

Ms. [REDACTED] Yes.

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

Ms. [REDACTED] No.

Ms. Barrineau. Okay. That's the end to my preamble.

Do you guys have anything?

Okay. The clock is 10:07, and we will start the first hour.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Agent [REDACTED] thank you again for coming today. And I just want to let you know, we want to make this as easy and painless

and not stressful as possible. So we just want to get the facts as you remember them and kind of fill in some holes. And then we will be done.

Can you tell us about your professional background before you joined DS and the State Department?

A Before I joined DS?

Q Yes, ma'am.

A I worked for a small sheriff's office [REDACTED].

Q When did you join Diplomatic Security?

A In 1997.

Q Wow. Can you tell us about your assignments within DS once you joined.

A Initially I was in the [REDACTED] field office. And I was encouraged to go to the Mobile Security Division, which I joined them shortly thereafter completing the regular academy and the courses.

From there, I was assigned to [REDACTED]. From there, I went to [REDACTED]; and then [REDACTED]; and then [REDACTED]; back to [REDACTED]; and then [REDACTED]; Benghazi; [REDACTED], for a short period. And I [REDACTED]. And now I'm currently at the [REDACTED].

Q So when do you get your tour in Paris? Because you have hit all of the hot spots once and sometimes twice.

A Maybe after the [REDACTED].

Q Maybe. Sounds like they owe you a little bit.

How do you wind up in Benghazi? Did you get recruited? Did you volunteer?

A At that time, [REDACTED]. And from there, we went to [REDACTED]. And we managed [REDACTED] affairs from [REDACTED] for a short, brief period. Then I came back, and I was in D.C. And they were looking for volunteers for Benghazi. And I didn't have like a job at that point, so I went to Benghazi.

Q And you hadn't seen Libya. It's the only place you hadn't seen in that part of the world.

Do you remember what the timeframe was when you were in Benghazi?

A I was there April until the end of May.

Q 2012?

A 2012.

Q Okay. And so, at that point, you had already had MSD training because you told us about that early in your career. Did you have to do any more high-threat training before you went to Benghazi? Or I suspect you'd probably had all that before all of your posts.

A I had all that. In preparation of going to [REDACTED] you have high-threat training.

Q Right. So when you arrived in Benghazi in April of 2012, how many other agents did you have with you when you got there that were already on the ground?

A One.

Q Just one?

A Yes.

Q Did you turn over with anyone? Or had that agent been by themselves before you got there? Do you remember? That's a tough one.

A I don't remember how long. But prior to my arriving, I know that [REDACTED] had been there because we had corresponded.

Q Right. What was your understanding of the security situation in Benghazi before you got there?

A Well, it was in transition.

Q Was it what you expected when you got there, once you landed?

A Each post is different. So I don't know that I had any expectations of -- each post is different.

Q Fair enough.

A So when I get there, I just --

Q Take what you have.

So you got to Benghazi. And you left from the airport. And you went to the Special Mission Compound. What did it look like?

A It looked like a normal housing compound, like a normal -- you know, like somewhere you would live here.

Q Did it look like, based on your experience in a lot of other -- I will say high-threat embassies, even though I know that that term has been used more post-Benghazi. Did it look like what you were used to in other high-threat-type posts in terms of the physical security of the compound?

A Well, I opened [REDACTED]. So [REDACTED] is very similar to Benghazi.

Q Okay.

A It was just a cluster of homes. In [REDACTED], we lived on an open street.

Q Oh, wow. So knowing what you know about [REDACTED] did the security in Benghazi -- the physical security of the compound make you uneasy, nervous, or is it kind of what you were expecting for a post that was in transition and relatively new?

A I wouldn't say that. I mean, because you have to factor in all of the -- I mean, there's so many variables that go into that so I don't think that I could --

Q Were there any -- let's go this way then. Were there any glaring holes in the physical security that you noticed after your arrival? Things that you wanted to upgrade or that you didn't think were sufficient.

A Yes.

Q Like what?

A The IDNS. The duck-and-cover alarm system was not functional. We were in the middle of a fence, you know, an exterior external fence project. The lighting needed to have some adjustment. The cameras needed to have some adjustment.

Q Once you noticed these things that needed adjustments or upgrades or just more, what was kind of the mechanism for you to be able to do that? Or was there an established way to go about getting those things done?

A What is that?

Q Well, you said the cameras needed adjusting and the lights needed adjusting and you were in the middle of a fence project. So, for example, with the lights and the cameras, is that something you

could do at post yourself?

A No.

Q So did someone need to come do that for you?

A Yes.

Q Did they come in a reasonable amount of time? And were they able to fix it?

A Yes.

Q So they got the lights fixed and the cameras fixed?

A Yes.

Q And the IDNS fixed?

A Yes.

Q And then can you tell us a little bit about the fence construction project.

A The original design or what we call a scope of work had been outlined. And there was a decision prior to my arrival that the scope of work would be modified. And the fence was completed during my time. And it was completed to the specification outlined by the RSO in Tripoli.

Q And were you satisfied with it? You can be honest.

A It was better than it was.

Q Okay.

A So it was an improvement.

Q What did you wind up with?

A Portions of the initial project had been completed. So in some areas of the compound, there was an internal chain link fence

topped with wire. And the modification was to focus on the concrete exterior fence, and that fence was topped with wire. Does that make sense?

Q I think so, yes.

Was it a smooth construction process? I mean, were you using local workers? And was that a smooth process?

A Yes. The company was responsive. And as with any project, it moved at the pace that it would move.

Q I like that.

Was there any way for you to vet the workers that were working on the compound? Or were you just having to essentially take what you could get in that environment?

A We weren't inundated with a large number of workers. It was only a few workers and they were the same workers, to the best of my recollection. And these are the folks that would have been brought on before my time. So, in terms of vetting, I can't respond. I don't know.

Q Understood.

So you said that the fence was built to the specifications of the RSO in Tripoli?

A Yes.

Q Was your chain of command -- when you were the RSO in Benghazi -- did you go through Tripoli, or did you report straight back to D.C.? Or a little bit of both?

A A little bit of both.

Q So I assume in Tripoli you were reporting to -- was it [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] at the time?

A Yes.

Q Who in D.C. would you have been dealing with?

A [REDACTED]

Q In International Programs?

A Yes. He was the desk officer.

Q Was he who you had worked with for the construction and the upgrades and all those sorts of things, to at least make the requests? Or no?

A No.

Q Okay. Who were you making security upgrade requests through?

A [REDACTED] was my point of contact regarding the fenced compound.

Q Okay. All right. Let's shift gears just a little bit.

What was the security profile like to move -- I think the principal officer most of the time you were there was [REDACTED]. Is that right?

A Yes.

Q So when you would do movements with her, how many agents and cars did you have at your disposal to be able to move around the city?

A Around the city? The local movements?

Q Uh-huh.

A Typically it was one agent. And the February 17th folks

would accompany.

Q As part of the security?

A Yes.

Q So you said when you got there you had one other agent with you.

A Yes.

Q Did that increase, decrease? Was that about average while you were there?

A It increased.

Q Do you remember the most -- the highest number of agents you had?

A We were a total of three.

Q And that was the most --

A The most.

Q -- you ever had.

A Uh-huh.

Q Did you feel like that was sufficient to be able to run the facility day to day and do movements with Ms. [REDACTED]?

A To do the day-to-day, we were able to manage with three. But that was the bottom number. Anything less than that would have been extremely difficult to keep everything running.

Q Would more than three have been helpful?

A Much.

Q Did you make that request for extra bodies while you were there?

A Yes.

Q And who did you make that request to?

A [REDACTED]

Q And what was the response that you got?

A There were issues with finding volunteers.

Q Did [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] in Tripoli ever offer, suggest people from Tripoli come in to assist and plus up the numbers? Or no?

A At some point, there was -- I asked, and we did have three gentlemen from Tripoli come down to help.

Q But they didn't stay? That was just --

A They did not stay.

Q -- temporary?

A Uh-huh.

Q You mentioned local movements inside the city. With only three agents, were you able to do any movements outside the city?

A I can't recall if we -- I had -- I can't remember if our second trip -- I can't remember how many were on the second trip. The first trip I can remember outside of the city.

Q So you were able to go outside of the city?

A Yes.

Q And how did that work? Did you leave somebody back at the compound and then take an agent or two?

A Yes. We left two at the compound because remember I had asked for additional support --

Q Right. Okay.

A So there were two left at the compound. And there were four American personnel, not including [REDACTED], the principal officer, on the trip.

Q And it went okay? That seemed like sufficient resources?

A Yes. Given that moment in time.

Q Understood.

Did Ms. [REDACTED] -- was she generally cooperative in terms of, if you made a security assessment and said, you know, oh, we can do this, or we can't do this, or we shouldn't do this, did she usually defer to your security expertise?

A Yes.

Q Did you ever have to say, "No, ma'am, I'm sorry, we can't make that movement or we can't do whatever"?

A I cannot remember. But given what might have been going on on a particular day --

Q I understand. And I know we are asking you about something that was 3 years ago.

A I cannot remember.

Q Okay.

Let's talk about the security in Benghazi, the security situation in Benghazi and kind of as a city.

I know right before you left, I think, the Red Cross was bombed. But were there any other major security incidents in Benghazi while you were there?

A Yes.

Q Can you tell us about those.

A I cannot remember the dates.

Q That's fair.

A Or which came first.

Q That's fine.

A There was a bombing at the courthouse.

Q Okay.

A Or at some sort of a government building.

Q Right.

A To be clear, a Libyan Government building. And there was -- I want to say something happened with the U.N. where they had -- they call it a gelatina. It's a small pressed explosive that they use for fishing. So they throw it into the pond. It explodes, and the fish float to the top.

Q That's one way to catch fish.

A Yes. There was an incident I think involving the U.N. where someone tossed that at one of their arrivals or departures at a venue. But it wasn't anything serious. No one was hurt.

Q Did you ever feel like those were targeted at Western interests? Or did they just seem to be fairly random, based on how security was in Benghazi at the time?

A I don't know.

Q That's fair.

I'm sorry. I'm skipping around. But let's go back to the

compound.

At the special mission ground, you had the Blue Mountain Group that was the local guard force and the February 17th Brigade kind of serving as like a QRF response, right?

A Yes.

Q So with the Blue Mountain Group, did they function -- you have had a lot of experience at other embassies. Did they function like other local guard forces that you were accustomed to?

A In most other posts, when I have arrived, the guard force program has been in place for some time.

Q Right.

A Finding Libyans that would work at what I would consider an American ethic or standard was -- it was something that needed to be learned by them, what our expectations were. So it did take some time for them to comprehend, you know, our expectations and then, you know, for them to be what I would consider, you know, productive members of our security.

Q So what were your expectations for the Blue Mountain Group?

A In terms of --

Q What was their job? And what did you expect them to do? Let's say in the event of an attack.

A To hit the duck and cover.

Q And after spending some time with them, were you confident that they would at least do that?

A Yes.

Q Did you -- I hesitate to use the word "trust." But did you trust the members of the Blue Mountain Group that were on the compound to be loyal to you in that they would help the problem instead of make the problem worse?

A You know, you never know those things. You never know. You can never fully trust or -- I'm sorry to say. But you cannot fully trust or believe, you know, until the incident occurs as to what the individual may or may not do.

Q Was that specific to Benghazi? Or do you feel that way in most of your posts?

A Most of the posts.

Q Let's go the same route with the February 17th. What was their role in the event of an incident or an attack?

A Their role was a lot more engagement and participation in terms of -- in terms of -- because they were armed. The local guard force was not armed.

Q So they would just push the IDNS and duck and cover and they would do whatever. And the February 17th was supposed to help respond?

A Yes.

Q What did you know about Feb. 17th's training? Or did you and your agents help train them?

A We had three -- like I said, we had three persons that came from Tripoli. And that was a great opportunity for us to expand the training program, which we took advantage of that and did.

Q Were you confident that Feb. 17th, in the event of an

incident, would respond as you expected and assist?

A I think "hopeful" would be a better word than "confident."

Q Okay. For both Blue Mountain Group and Feb. 17th, did you have any say in the selection of who was there or an ability to vet them? Or were they just being provided and whoever is there is who you had?

A In most contract arrangements with the local guard force program, if there is an individual that is not performing at, you know, the standard we believe, we do have the ability to meet with the company manager and to request that that person -- you know, they still can work for the company but they may not be employed by -- you know, be physically working with us.

Q Did you have any problems like that?

RPTR MCKENZIE

EDTR SECKMAN.

Ms. [REDACTED] During my time, there was one gentleman that was sleeping, and he was released. Okay. That was Blue Mountain.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. Then did you have any issues with the Feb. 17th --

A I did not.

Q -- members?

Okay. So back to the Blue Mountain Group. And, again, I know this is 3.5 years ago.

Do you remember while you were there -- I think it happened before you got there, but it came to light while you were there -- about a Blue Mountain employee who had left and it turned out later might have been dirty, for lack of a better word, and working against -- maybe not loyal to the Americans and was causing some problems.

Do you remember any of that?

A I don't recall any of the specifics. Just prior to my arrival, though, there was -- the gelatina was thrown over -- I guess over the fence or the wall. And there had been employee issues prior to my arrival. And they suspected that maybe that was the person who had thrown -- you know, a disgruntled employee had thrown the gelatina over the wall.

Q But that's all you really remember about that?

A That's all I remember.

Q Did the local guard force come with all the equipment they

needed? Or did you have to provide additional equipment for them?

A I don't recall.

Q Do you recall having --

A They had uniforms. They had radios.

Q Okay.

A I cannot remember.

Q That's okay.

Let's do it this way. Refreshing is a little bit easier than just having to completely remember.

Do you remember having to ask for additional helmets and vests because they were sitting in cars that I guess small arms fire would occasionally hit?

A I don't remember.

Q That's okay.

A But I would have if it was needed. I don't remember.

Q That's okay.

A I will need to get my glasses.

Q Okay. That is fine.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Barrineau. For the record, this is an email chain. It's a State Department Document C, as in Charlie, 05474497.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q And the last email is an email from [REDACTED] to

██████████ and ██████████.

So I just want to start midway down the first page. It says, quote: "██████████ we could definitely use the vests and helmets. Our nightly celebratory fire penetrated the roof of one of the Toyotas. It did not go through the headliner but did enter the metal. The guards and all mission personnel have been instructed to seek cover when the shooting begins. The vehicles are the only cover we have at two gates, so the helmets would be extremely valuable to Benghazi. ██████████," end quote.

Do you recognize this document?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Do you sort of remember this document --

A Yes.

Q -- from 3 years ago?

So could you tell us about getting the vests and the helmets for the guards and kind of what happened.

A I can't remember if we got them. I'm sorry. I don't know.

Q That's okay. So you don't remember if you got them. You obviously made the request here, but you don't remember --

A I don't remember.

Q Okay.

Let me ask you this then. I totally understand why you might not remember that from 3.5 years ago.

Would the person -- would they have come from ██████████ -- meaning, if we asked ██████████ that question, would he maybe be able to know

if the request was granted?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

Ms. [REDACTED] I don't know.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. Did you make any other equipment requests or upgrade requests that you remember?

A I can't remember.

Q What about staffing requests? I know you said that you asked for additional staff. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

A Well, we were never at full complement or the full number that we were authorized.

Q Which was --

A Five.

Q And what was the reason you were given for why you were never at five?

A No volunteers.

Q Would there have been an ability -- and you may not know this, so if you know -- would there have been an ability to voluntold, to send people without, or was it solely based on volunteers at the time?

A I don't know.

Q But the reason you were given was, there were just no volunteers?

A Say that again?

Q I'm sorry. So the reason you were given for not being at

the full complement of five was that there were just no volunteers?

A Yes.

Q Did you make any physical security requests that were denied? I know that you said the lights got fixed, and the cameras got fixed, and the duck and cover got fixed, and the fence was finished. But were there any additional requests that you made that were denied?

A I can't remember.

Q Okay. Let's go to a slightly different topic.

In the event that the security in Benghazi deteriorated, what was the plan for an evacuation if you had to get out of Benghazi?

A We would have been dependent upon [REDACTED].

Q To evacuate? That was kind of the sole --
Go ahead. I'm sorry.

A Yes.

Q I'm trying to think how I can ask this here.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Can we go off the record?

[Discussion off the record.]

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q I'm going to ask this very vague. If you don't feel like you can answer it here, you don't have to.

Do you know if the plan when you evacuated, were you going to go -- were you going to drive? Were you going to fly? Do you have any idea how you were going to get out?

A I don't remember.

Q That's okay.

Were you, as the RSO, the person -- could you decide that it was time to evacuate based on what was going on on the ground? Or did you have to be told that you could evacuate from D.C. or from Tripoli? Was that your decision or a group decision?

Mr. Evers. Do you understand the question?

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Let me try again.

Did you have the unilateral ability to say, "X is happening in Benghazi; this is not good; we need to leave"?

A It depends. It depends on the situation.

Q Okay.

A It would depend on, you know, what's going on.

Q During your time in Benghazi, did you ever feel like you needed to shut the compound down and leave Benghazi?

A No.

Q And you never suggested that -- or made a recommendation that you needed to evacuate?

A To close?

Q Right.

A No.

Q Did you make any recommendations about the nature or posture of the post based on the security?

Mr. Evers. Do you understand the question?

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Well, you said not to close. Did you make any

recommendations -- I would say like draw down, but I don't know how you would draw down from not very many. So no?

A No drawdown recommendations, no.

Q Did Benghazi have tripwires?

A I don't remember.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Clarke. I just have a couple of followup questions.

You mentioned earlier that you requested additional resources, and so three individuals came down from Tripoli. Do you recall, were those DS agents, the individuals that came from Tripoli to assist?

Ms. [REDACTED] They were not DS agents.

Ms. Clarke. Were they SST members?

Mr. Evers. Do you know what that means?

Ms. [REDACTED] I don't know what that means.

Mr. Evers. Could you use a different acronym?

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Were they DOD personnel?

A They were DOD personnel. Yes, ma'am.

Q What prompted your request for those individuals to come to Benghazi?

A The principal officer wanted to make a trip to Derna.

Q And because of that, you wanted to have additional resources on the ground in Benghazi to assist in that trip?

A Yes.

Q Do you recall how long those individuals were in Benghazi?

A I cannot remember the dates.

Q Was it longer than a week, less than a week?

A They stayed longer than the trip.

Q Okay. And about how long did the trip take? I'm sure that would have been --

A The trip was just a day trip. I believe the trip was just -- I don't think we overnighted. I believe the trip was a day trip.

Q Okay. So those individuals more than likely didn't stay longer than a week?

A I don't know. I'm sorry.

Q Did [REDACTED] travel with them?

A No.

Q And during your tenure in Benghazi, did [REDACTED] come to Benghazi?

A No.

Q Once those individuals returned to Tripoli, did you ever receive any other additional resources from Tripoli as far as personnel?

A I can't remember.

Q Okay. You also mentioned that you thought or your assessment was that three DS agents was sufficient to be able to perform the day-to-day operations of the post. Can you kind of describe for us what you meant by the day-to-day operations?

A Yes. Running the local guard force program, which means

overseeing training; making sure that equipment is in order for them; managing the movements of the principal officer; and also, you know, taking a look at physical security and maintaining any improvements or any projects that might be ongoing with the physical security.

Q So, in your assessment, three agents were sufficient to allow the principal officer to continue in her capacity of going out into the city and making contacts with the --

A Based on the current tempo of the current existing principal officer and based on it being in the city, yes.

Q And, typically, did the principal officers have meetings off-compound? Or were a significant number of her meetings held on-compound, if you recall?

A I don't recall. Probably a little of both. It's both.

Q You said it was, based off of the tempo of that particular principal officer, three agents were sufficient. What do you mean by the tempo of her movement?

A We were not moving off-compound every day.

Q Do you recall how often you would move off-compound?

A I'm sorry. I don't.

Q But it wasn't every day?

A It was not every day.

Q Was it several times a week, three to four times a week?

A I'm sorry.

Q Okay. And that's fine. If that's your recollection or if you are unable to recall, that's fine. We just want your best

recollection. So we appreciate that.

Ms. Barrineau: I know we are not at an hour yet, but I think we are going to stop and take a break and let the minority have their round. And we will probably have some more after that.

[Recess.]

RPTR MERCHANT

EDTR HUMKE

[11:00 a.m.]

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. I think the last thing I have is just kind of some post event questions for things that have happened way after Benghazi.

After you got back from Benghazi and then after the attacks on Benghazi, did anyone at the State Department ever ask you about your experiences in Benghazi or want to debrief you on your time in Benghazi?

A I believe I traveled straight from Benghazi to [REDACTED]. So I can't recall having any conversations. I don't think I came back for consultations.

Q Okay. Once the attacks happened and Congress began investigating, did you ever provide any documents to Congress? Were you requested to provide any documents to Congress?

A No.

Q Did you sign any nondisclosure agreements about not talking about your time in Benghazi?

A Not that I can recall. I don't know.

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. Evers. I just want to clarify. You asked her if she provided any documents to Congress and she said no.

Ms. Barrineau. Right.

Mr. Evers. But I am not sure if -- I mean, that was a pretty precise question directly to Congress.

Ms. Barrineau. Right.

Mr. Evers. I am not sure if there are other avenues that she could provide information.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q Okay. Let me ask it differently and maybe more specifically.

Were you asked by anyone in the State Department to provide any documents to them?

A So there was a problem with my particular email.

Q Okay.

A Okay. When we left [REDACTED], of course all the ClassNet infrastructure was destroyed.

Q Right.

A So I completely lost that account and it went into a limbo that neither could I access it or could they transfer it or could we make it work. The unclass, however, was the servers were pulled and boxed and we hand-carried those out, so it still caused my account to kind of be in limbo.

That Benghazi account was some sort of a temporary account that they created, and when I left I could no longer access it. When I got to [REDACTED], they had to make a new account, so I didn't have really anything to provide to anybody.

Q So you couldn't get to it anyway?

A Uh-uh.

Q Okay.

A After the attack, however, of course, DS had many questions. Many people had many questions. [REDACTED], a gentleman from the FBI came out [REDACTED]. And then also while I was in [REDACTED], I was on a conference call with the ARB.

Q Okay.

A And that was it. But it is my understanding that whatever came about, the paper part, came from some sort of internal mechanism where they collected it. I didn't really have anything outside of that, is that correct? Okay. I mean, is that --

Q That makes perfect sense.

A So I never provided anything to Congress. Like me, little old me. You know, I am sure that there are things with my name on it that went, but I didn't do it.

Q Understood. Understood. And I have a problem with you calling yourself "little old me" based on the resume that you gave us earlier. You got to give yourself a little more credit than that.

So you didn't provide anything, but you did speak with the FBI and you did speak with ARB?

A Yes, yes.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q You mentioned you were on a conference call with the ARB?

A Yes.

Q Do you recall, were you the only individual being interviewed or were there multiple individuals on that conference call

being interviewed?

A No, I was the only person being interviewed. But there were multiple people on the other, wherever they were calling from, I don't know. There were many people on the phone, but I was the only one -- the questions were directed to me and I responded to a group of people.

Q Thank you.

Ms. Barrineau. Actually I have one more question to that. Do you remember, was that a secure call or an unclassified call?

Mr. Evers. If she remembers.

BY MS. BARRINEAU:

Q If you remember?

A I don't remember.

Q Okay.

A I want to say unclassified.

Q Okay.

A I don't remember.

Q I guess my final question is, is there anything that we didn't ask that you thought we might ask that you want to tell us about your time in Benghazi?

Mr. Evers. I am sure she'd be happy to answer further questions.

Ms. Barrineau. Okay. Thank you so much for coming and doing this. We really appreciate it.

We'll go off the record.

[Recess.]

EXAMINATION

BY MR. DESAI:

Q Let's go back on the record. The time is approximately 11:12 a.m.

Ms. [REDACTED], good morning. Let me just reintroduce myself. My name is Ronak Desai. I am one of the counsels with the minority staff of the Select Committee. I am joined today by my colleague, Susanne Sachsman Grooms.

On behalf of the entire minority staff and its members, I want to thank you, first, for your appearance here today. We also want to thank you for your service to our country thus far. We recognize that appearing in front of Congress can be fairly daunting so we are going to do our best to get you out of here as expeditiously as possible. We just have a few questions left for you.

If at any time you feel as if we need to take a pause or take a break, please let me know. We will be happy to do that.

In the last session, my colleagues touched on a number of different areas with respect to some physical security upgrades that you requested and you may have made, as well as some staffing requests you may have made. I just want to ask you just some very straightforward questions about those areas.

At any point during your time at Benghazi, did you ever feel as if you couldn't be totally forthcoming or totally honest in your opinion to your superiors about the mission's physical security or anything else?

A No.

Q Did anyone at any time ever discourage your advocacy efforts to improve the mission's physical security through upgrade requests?

A No.

Q Were you ever told by anyone to keep your mouth shut about mission Benghazi's physical security or the staffing shortages conflicting the post?

A No.

Q Did anyone at any point ever indicate to you directly or indirectly that you would suffer consequences or be penalized for expressing any concerns about the security posture or seeking security upgrades?

A No.

Q And did anyone ever tell you not to rock the boat or make waves through your security upgrade requests or staffing requests?

A No.

Q At any point, did you ever face retaliation or adverse employment consequences by expressing your concerns about the mission's physical security or seeking to address them through upgrade requests?

A No.

Q Did you ever feel like you couldn't be totally forthcoming about any aspects of the security posture of staffing in Benghazi?

A No.

Q And did you ever feel like you couldn't be totally forthcoming about the overall security environment and the possible

risks or threats to U.S. personnel in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Did you ever interact with Ambassador Stevens while you were in Benghazi or before or after?

A No.

Q Okay. So at no point then, since you didn't talk to him, did he ever suppress your opinions on your security assessments about the posture in Benghazi, is that right?

A No.

Q And to your knowledge were his opinions at any point about the security or anything else Benghazi related ever suppressed by anybody, if you know?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. And at any point, at any time, did anyone ever tell you not to raise concerns about staffing, physical security upgrades or anything else Benghazi related?

A No.

Q Great. So if I can just shift your focus now to the Accountability Review Board. Did you speak with the ARB?

A Yes.

Q And do you recall when you spoke with them?

A No. I was in [REDACTED], I do know that.

Q Okay. You were in [REDACTED] when you spoke with them, so you spoke with them over the phone?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And do you recall who you spoke with over the phone or who was present on the other side of that conversation?

A I remember Ambassador Pickering.

Q Okay. Anyone else?

A Admiral Mullen.

Q Okay. Totally fine.

And overall did you feel as if Ambassador Pickering and Admiral Mullen were respective and responsive to the information you were conveying to them over the phone?

A They asked the questions and I answered.

Q Okay. And the information that you conveyed to them over the phone, was that effectively the same information that you have conveyed to us today over the course of our session in the last hour now, if you recall?

A I don't recall all their questions, but whatever they asked, I answered and whatever you ask, I will answer.

Q Sure.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Do you recall answering any of their questions back when they interviewed you any differently than you've answered any questions here today?

Ms. [REDACTED] No.

BY MR. DESAI:

Q With respect to the ARB, were you ever asked or ordered not to provide information to the ARB?

A No.

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

A No.

Q Great. We have reached almost the end of our session. I am going to shift gears just a little bit, Ms. [REDACTED] I am going to ask you a series of questions about several public allegations that have been made related to the attacks. We understand that the committee is investigating these allegations and, as a result, I have to ask every witness about these allegations. But I don't want you to think that by asking you these questions surrounding these allegations that either I or the minority members of the committee believe that these allegations have any merit.

You will see that there is a handful of these. And the way I want to proceed is I will ask you about the allegation and I will ask you whether or not you have any evidence to support the allegation that is being made. If you don't, just say you don't and we will move on to the next allegation until we finish the set. Is that clear?

A Yes.

Q Great. So I am going to go ahead and start. And, again, the key here is whether or not you have any evidence to support the allegation I am about to tell you.

A Okay.

Q So it has been alleged that Secretary of State Clinton intentionally blocked military action on the night of the attacks. One Congressman has speculated that quote "Secretary Clinton told Leon

Panetta to stand down" end quote and this resulted in the Defense Department not sending more assets to help in Benghazi.

Do you have any evidence that Secretary of State 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 2012 cable denying security to Libya. The Washington Post Fact Checker evaluated this claim and gave it "Four Pinocchio's," 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 I don't know.

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

A I don't know, I don't know, I guess to all of them. I don't have any evidence, no. And I don't know of anything.

Q I am just going to go back. And I understand that, but we just have to go through the entire script. So I am going to ask you the question that I asked just a couple minutes ago, just to make sure we have it clear for the record, on whether or not you have evidence with respect to this particular allegation.

A Okay.

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 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 quote "The CIA was not collecting and shipping arms from Libya to Syria" end quote and that they found quote "no support for this allegation." End quote.

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 the 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 ordered 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 you these questions also for the 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 then misrepresented his actions when he told Congress that the CIA quote "faithfully performed our duties in accordance with the highest standards of objectivity and nonpartisanship." End quote.

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 CIA Deputy Director Mike 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?

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. 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 quote "There was no stand down order issued to

U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi." End quote.

Do you have 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 quote "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." End quote.

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

A No.

Q Do you have 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 decided not to deploy?

A No.

Q That will do. I want to thank you again, Ms.

██████████, for your appearance today.

[Whereupon, at 11:27 a.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 declined to review the accompanying transcript.