

RPTR BAKER

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

INTERVIEW OF: [REDACTED]

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2015

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-205,
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 1:51 p.m.

Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

DANA CHIPMAN, CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

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For [REDACTED]:

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For the STATE DEPARTMENT:

[REDACTED]

ERIC SNYDER

Mr. Missakian. Let's go on the record then. We are now beginning the 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 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.

Mr. [REDACTED], would you please state and spell your name for the record.

Mr. [REDACTED]. It's [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

Mr. Missakian. First off, on behalf of the committee, both the majority and minority staff, thank you for being here voluntarily. The committee appreciates your cooperation in our investigation. My name is Craig Missakian. I'm one of the attorneys on the majority staff side. At this point, we traditionally go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves just so you know who's here. So I'll start with Dana Chipman.

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

Mr. Su. Jonathan Su from Latham & Watkins on behalf of Mr. [REDACTED].

Ms. [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]. I'm an attorney-adviser with the U.S. Department of State.

Mr. Snyder. Eric Snyder, Department of State.

Mr. Kenny. Peter Kenny with the minority staff.

Mr. Missakian. Before we begin questioning Mr. [REDACTED], I'd like to go over some of the ground rules that apply to the interview here today. Generally, the way the questioning proceeds is that a member of the majority staff will ask you questions for up to an hour, and then once I am done, I will hand it over to an attorney for the minority staff, and then we will go back and forth an hour at a time until we finish.

Have you ever had your deposition taken or testified before Congress before?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No, I have not.

Mr. Missakian. This procedure is slightly different than a deposition in that we don't follow the rules of evidence that might apply in a Federal District Court proceeding, for example. In that sense, the witness or your counsel may raise objections for privilege only, subject to review by the chairman of the committee, Congressman Gowdy. If the objections cannot be resolved in this interview, you may be required to return for a deposition or a hearing once those issues have been resolved.

Members of the staff committee are not permitted to raise objections when the other side is asking questions. This session is to begin as unclassified. If we get into any area where you would be required to disclose classified information, please let me know. We are not prepared to do that today, so we will have to make other arrangements if we decide we want to go there. You are welcome to confer with your counsel at any time during the interview; and if for

any reason, if I ask you a question that you don't understand, just tell me I don't understand and I'll do my best to rephrase it for you.

If you'd like to take a break at any point in time, talk to your counsel or for any other reason, just let us know and we'll be happy to accommodate that. As you can see, there is an official court reporter in the room taking down what you say and I say and what everybody else has said during the course of the interview, so the one thing we ask is that to the extent you answer a question, do so verbally rather than a nod of the head, for example, and we do our best not to step on each other's -- me on your answers and you on my questions, just for the sake of the court reporter and the clarity of the record.

You'll understand this as we go along. If there's a question I ask you you don't know the answer to or can't recall, that's fine. Just say you don't know or you don't understand. We don't want you guessing here. To the extent you have a best estimate or something that you've put together based on facts you do know, that's fine. But we just don't want any guesses.

Now, do you understand, Mr. [REDACTED], that you are required to answer questions posed to you by Congress truthfully?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Missakian. Do you also understand that that obligation extends to questions I may ask you as a member of the staff of a congressional committee?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Missakian. Do you also understand that a witness that

knowingly provides false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury or for making false statements?

Mr. [REDACTED]. Yes.

Mr. Missakian. Is there any reason why your interview should not go forward today? Are you prepared to give your best answers to the questions?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I am.

Mr. Missakian. That's the extent of our preamble. Mr. Kenny, do you have anything you'd like to add?

Mr. Kenny. Yes, I'd just like to take the opportunity to thank Mr. [REDACTED] for coming in. I'm looking forward to hearing what you have to say today.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

Mr. Missakian. Jonathan, would you like to add anything at this point?

Mr. Su. Sure. For the record, Craig, I'll say that Mr. [REDACTED] is here, as you know, appearing voluntarily before the committee. You and I have corresponded before about the scope of the interview, and it relates to the 2012 attacks in Benghazi, Libya, and the immediate days thereafter. You've confirmed that the committee's interest relates solely to this witness's government service and that the committee would advise me if there are any other specific matters of interest; and I've not understood there to be any other matters of interest. We are not getting into any classified information today. But, you know, with those caveats, we're certainly prepared to proceed

if that works for you.

Mr. Missakian. Yes, that does. That is my understanding of the scope of the interview, Mr. [REDACTED]. It may come to pass that an answer you give may open up other areas beyond the scope that your attorney just described. I may ask you questions there. I don't anticipate it, but it may happen. We'll see how it goes.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q When did you begin work at the State Department?

A In early 2009.

Q Do you remember a month?

A I think February 2009.

Q And what were you doing immediately before the State Department?

A I worked for then-Senator Clinton in her Senate office in Washington.

Q Doing what?

A I was her deputy press secretary.

Q How long did you hold that position?

A I was deputy press secretary for all of -- for a year-and-a-half, and was in that office for about 3 years.

Q What did you do for Senator Clinton prior to becoming the deputy press secretary?

A I was the assistant to her chief of staff.

Q So you came to the State Department when Secretary Clinton

came to the State Department?

A Correct.

Q How long did you stay at the State Department?

A For 4 years.

Q Do you recall what month you left?

A I believe it was February of 2013.

Q What have you done since?

A I have continued to work for Secretary Clinton.

Q And what do you do for her?

A I'm her chief speech writer.

Q When did that employment begin?

A Immediately following the State Department, so February of 2013.

Q And what is the entity that employs you, if you know?

A Hillary for America, her presidential campaign.

Q So Hillary for America, I assume that's a corporation?

A That is, well, whatever kind of entity a political presidential campaign is, that is who employs me now.

Q Okay, but you began work for that entity, whatever form that may be in February 2013?

A No, the campaign did not exist then. In February 2013, I went to work for her in her personal office, Secretary Clinton's personal office, and then when the campaign began, which was in this year, I went to work for the campaign.

Q Again, what is your formal title with the campaign?

A Director of speech writing.

Q Do you know the name of the entity that employed you between the time you left the State Department and going to work for the Secretary's presidential campaign?

A I believe it was -- well, it was Secretary Clinton's personal office, and I believe the technical name was something like ZFS Holdings, or something like that.

Q During the time you were at the State Department, what was your job title?

A Speech writer.

Q And where did that position fit in the hierarchy of positions within the speech writing department?

A There was a director of speech writing, and then there were several speech writers. And then there was one or two junior, like a staff assistant, and that was it.

Q Let me ask you, who was the director of speech writing at that point when you first started with the State Department?

A Well, [REDACTED] was when I first started with the State Department.

Q And then it eventually became [REDACTED]?

A Yes.

Q Who were the other speech writers there with you at the time?

A Over the whole 4 years?

Q Over the whole 4 years, yes.

A I might forget somebody, but [REDACTED] for a period of

time, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], for a period of time [REDACTED], [REDACTED], myself, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. For a very brief period, a gentleman named [REDACTED], I can't remember his last name. The core team that was consistent, [REDACTED] was there the whole time with me and [REDACTED] was there the whole time. He was the staff assistant, and then the rest of the team shifted around a little bit.

Q Have you had any conversations with any of those individuals that you just named about the Benghazi investigation?

A The fact of it, yes. The details of it, no.

Q Okay, who did you have that conversation with, the fact of it?

Mr. Kenny. Can you be specific? Which investigation?

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q That's fair. Any of the investigations that were stood up in the wake of the Benghazi attacks.

A Well, in my capacity as a speech writer, I wrote about the ARB report, and I helped prepare testimony the Secretary gave before the committee. Before which committee, it was the House and Senate Foreign Affairs Committees in 2012. So that was a collaborative process, and so, of course, much discussed.

Q So when you say you wrote material for Secretary Clinton's appearance before Congress, is that when she testified in January 2013?

A Correct. She gave an opening statement which I helped prepare.

Q Who else worked on that opening statement? Do you recall?

A I worked closely with Jake Sullivan, but I don't recall -- and it was a collaborative process, but I don't recall. I couldn't give you a list -- conditional list. I don't recall.

Q Did you take part in any prep sessions with the Secretary?

A I did not.

Q Who did?

A I don't know.

Q Do you know if those even occurred?

A I don't know about that.

Q Other than the conversation you had with Mr. Sullivan in connection with that statement, were there any other conversations you had with anybody about the congressional investigations that were stood up after the attacks?

A Are you referring to this committee?

Q Yes, this committee included.

A Well, I've discussed with my lawyer in preparation for this session.

Mr. Su. He doesn't want -- I'll speak again for Craig when I say he understands that, you know, you and I may have spoken, but he is not -- you know, you can assume he is phrasing his questions other than with your attorney.

Mr. [REDACTED]. I don't recall any conversations like that.

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Okay, and that's from, you know, the time it happened up until today, other than your attorney?

A The fact of the committee being in existence has been much in the news, of course, you know, so -- but in terms of the details of it or what we would discuss here, no.

Q And who did you have those conversations with?

A About the fact that it exists?

Q Yes.

A I don't feel I could give you an exhaustive list, but I feel like, you know, sort of a comment, anyone you would discuss current events with, so any colleagues, coworkers, family members, but no one in particular that I could recall.

Q Okay, do you recall any conversations with Secretary Clinton about the investigation?

A No.

Q How about with Jake Sullivan?

A Insofar as Secretary Clinton, we have to prepare for Secretary Clinton's hearing, and I will once again probably help her prepare for that, but otherwise, no.

Q When you say Secretary Clinton's hearing, you're talking about helping her prepare for the upcoming appearance before this Benghazi committee on the 22nd?

A Correct.

Q Okay. Let's go back in time to September 11, 2012. I just want to ask you a few questions about that. Let's start with the protests in Cairo. Well, let me take you even a step back. Were you at the office that day?

A I was.

Q And do you recall when you left the office that day?

A The early evening.

Q Do you recall hearing about the protests in Cairo at any point during the day?

A I do, but I don't recall the details of how or when I heard.

Q What do you recall about how you heard and what you heard and when you heard?

A Yeah, I don't recall when or how I heard.

Q Do you recall generally anything about what you heard about Cairo?

A I recall that there was -- hearing that there was a protest

in Cairo, but I couldn't tell you when or how I heard that.

Q And do you recall how you heard about the attacks in Benghazi later that night?

A Jake Sullivan called me in the evening and told me about it.

Q Do you recall what time?

A I was at dinner, I imagine, so around dinner time.

Q Do you recall that being the first time you heard about the attacks?

A To the best of my recollection.

Q From what we have seen, the attacks began about 3:40 p.m. eastern time, so this would have been before you left the office. Did you hear anything about it before, or if I understood you --

A All these years later, I don't recall hearing about it before that phone call.

Q All right. Let's talk about the phone call again. Mr. Sullivan called you?

A Correct.

Q And how long did that phone conversation last?

A Maybe 5 or 10 minutes.

Q What do you recall being said by you and him during that call?

A He said that I should start working on remarks that the Secretary could give about an incident in our diplomatic post in Benghazi, that we had lost at least one colleague, that we didn't know

yet the status of the Ambassador, that it was a fluid situation, but I should start thinking about, you know, and working on what the Secretary could say.

Q Do you recall him giving you any details about what had occurred?

A Beyond what I just said, I don't recall any others.

Q Was there a plan discussed about how the process would unfold that night?

A In that first conversation, I don't think so.

Q So I gather there was another conversation after the first one?

A I spoke to him several times that evening.

Q By phone or in person?

A Both. We spoke a few more times by phone throughout the evening, and eventually, he came to my apartment in [REDACTED] Washington.

Q Let's focus on the phone calls first to begin. Do you recall anything that was said in any of the subsequent calls?

A You know, all these years later, I really can't distinguish now or remember now what was said in which call.

Q All right. That's fair. Let's just talk about what you remember without identifying it with any particular call. So just tell me what was said by each of you in all the calls.

A Well, as I said, he told me that we had lost one of our colleagues and that we didn't know the status of the Ambassador. Later

in the evening, he told me that the Ambassador was dead, but I can't recall whether that was in person or on the phone. And we discussed on the phone and in person, we discussed the tone that the Secretary's remarks should take; the goals that we would have to, in effect, eulogize the colleagues that we had lost; that we would have to demonstrate American resolve; that we would have to speak to a global audience and try to lower the temperature because, of course, it was a period of unrest, not just in Libya, but around the region and the world, and demonstrate, sort of, upholding American values. So we talked about that sort of tone.

Q Were there any other goals for the statement you were working on that you discussed?

A As I said, sort of honoring the colleagues that we lost, determination. I think I would add to the list sort of helping Americans make sense of a dangerous and difficult time, and sending a message to the world about American values, and lowering the temperature in a period of upheaval.

Q When you said helping Americans make sense, what did you mean by that?

A Well, we had lost a department personnel; and the world, there was all this upheaval across the region, and one of the goals of having a Secretary of State talk is so that Americans can understand America's role in the world and what are we doing there and what's the way forward. So any time the Secretary addresses a topic, that's part of it, and this would be no exception.

Q Was there any discussion of telling the American people who was responsible for the attacks in Benghazi and what their motives were?

A In fact, the opposite. What she said was that there would be time, that we were still learning about the motivations and methods of those who did this, and that there would be time for more reflection in the days ahead; so that was not a big focus of the remarks.

Mr. Su. Just so the record is clear, when you say she said that?

Mr. [REDACTED]. In her remarks, the Secretary --

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Maybe my question wasn't clear. Were still talking about conversations you had with Jake Sullivan the night of. Is there any discussion in any of those conversations about telling the American people who was responsible and what their motives were?

A No. And the opposite. We discussed, and we did write for her that sentiment, that we are still learning about the motivations and methods, and that there would be time to get into all that later.

Q I understand that's what was written. But my question was a different one. Hold on. We have to trade off here. I know it was written, but my question is, was it discussed? It sounds like you're saying it wasn't discussed, but then it was. Is there something reflected about it in the statements? I'm just not understanding.

A What I mean by that is insofar as we discussed that it would be appropriate to write that we were still learning, that was discussed, and then we wrote that. Beyond that, no.

Q So again, was there any discussion about telling the

American people who was responsible and what their motives were?

A Beyond that, we were still learning, no.

Q So that was the discussion. You two discussed we don't know what happened, so let's reflect that in the statement?

A I didn't say we don't know. I said we're still learning, but that was reflected.

Q Okay. Then if you were still learning, that suggests that you knew something at the time. What did you know at the time about who was responsible and their motives?

A I can only speak for myself.

Q That's all I'm asking about.

A And, you know, based on the information I had, had a group of heavily-armed militants had attacked our compound, and that's what I understood, and that's what we wrote.

Q Did you have any information beyond that in terms of motive or the identity of the individual attackers?

A No.

Q Where did you get that information?

A I got my information that evening primarily from Jake Sullivan. I was also part of -- I was on various internal State Department email chains, and I brought to it also the sort of context of what had been happening in the world over that day and previous days and weeks.

Q That night, and again, we're just focused on September 11, did you rely on any of the information you read in any newspaper reports

about the incident?

A Can you explain what you mean by "rely"?

Q Well, did any of the information you saw in media reports get reflected in the statement that you prepared?

A I think that, you know, media provided color and context for what was going on in the world, but beyond that, no.

Q I'm sorry. I don't understand what that means.

A I couldn't point to a specific newspaper article that I read that said, that I took facts from, no.

Q Thank you. That's what I meant. You talked about speaking to a global audience. What did you mean by that?

A I mean any time the Secretary of State speaks, the world is listening. We had -- it was a period of unrest across the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond; specifically, in the Muslim world, which was a source of concern; and how to lower that temperature and speak to that situation was an important issue.

Q Was that focused on the video?

A The video was the source of that unrest across the world in that period. And so, you know, lowering the temperature of that situation was one of our goals.

Q Again, focus just on the night of September 11. What information did you have that suggested that the video was, in any way, connected to what occurred in Benghazi?

A I don't recall any specific information.

Q Okay. What general information do you recall?

A I recall that it was the context with which we entered that night was protests across the Muslim world, specifically that day protests in Cairo that had turned violent at our embassy. That was the context with which we approached the situation, and then I couldn't recall for you that night a specific piece of information or not.

Q Just to be clear, my understanding is there was one protest in Cairo and that was it on September 11. Are you aware of others?

A What I'm aware of, this removed, these years later, is that throughout that period there were protests across the Muslim world. I couldn't tell you a chronology of which country and protest happened when, but I recall that we were concerned about it in the days before. We had seen, there was a history of inflammatory, provocative incidents leading to protests and violence, including the burning of a Koran, various incidents in Afghanistan, Danish cartoons. There is a long history there, and one that the State Department had to take seriously and be concerned about, and I could not recall the chronology of which protests happened when, but I recall the general sense that in that period, there was a lot of unrest.

Q You just said that you -- you, the State Department -- were concerned about the video, I gather, in the days before the September 11 attack. Did I hear that correctly?

A My recollection, again, I can't remember the whole chronology of when the protests were happening, but in general, I would say that is my recollection.

Q Do you recall being aware that protests were planned for

the Cairo Embassy prior to them occurring?

A That's nothing I know about.

Q I'm sorry?

A No, I don't recall anything like that.

Q So when you said that you were concerned about the protests, what do you mean?

A Well, there was a protest in Cairo at the Embassy, and that was concerning.

Q Right. I realize that, but you said you had been concerned days before that.

A I think, as I said, I can't reconstruct the entire chronology, but what I remember is in that period being concerned that there was a provocation that could lead to unrest and violence as we had seen in previous incidents.

Q So as you sit here today, you have no recollection of being concerned about protests prior to the protests in Cairo. Is that fair?

A What I can't recall now is whether the chronology of whether there were any or half dozen protests in the days before or whether they were all in the days after. I can't remember now.

Q Okay. So when you said you were concerned days before the Cairo protests, you just were misremembering at that point?

A I'm saying what I remember is that period, being concerned about it.

Q Okay. And I'm asking you, you stated, this is what you said, that you were concerned days before the protest in Cairo.

Ms. Sawyer. Craig, he's verified to you --

Mr. Missakian. Heather, please. We don't do this to you.

Ms. Sawyer. And I rarely do it to you, but you've asked the same question four times.

Mr. Missakian. I know, but I'm entitled to an answer to the question.

Ms. Sawyer. I think he has answered that. Sitting here today, he does not recall whether it was the days preceding or the days following. He just recalls it was generally around that time.

Mr. Missakian. I heard the same testimony you did. I just don't believe he answered my question.

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q You said that you were concerned days before the Cairo protests about those protests?

Mr. Kenny. I'm actually not sure -- I mean, we can go back to the tapes. I heard "provocative event."

Mr. Su. Shall we just start over and maybe let him answer the question?

Mr. Missakian. That would be fine.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Do you want to reask the question?

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Right. If I misheard what you testified to earlier, that's fine, just tell me. But I thought I heard you say there were concerns about the protests before they occurred?

A I think, at this removed, I can't remember the chronology

of when -- I do not remember when I first learned of the videos existence, and I do not remember when I first learned of resulting unrest in the Muslim world, and I do not remember when the first protests began across the region. I do remember that in that period around September 11 of 2012, that it was a source of concern for me and for the Department as a whole that there was unrest in the Muslim world relating to this video.

Q So other than the existence of the Cairo protest, were you aware of any other information -- I'm talking again about the night of September 11 -- that connected the video to what occurred in Benghazi?

A I don't recall any specific piece of information.

Q Okay. What do you recall discussing about the video with Jake Sullivan that night, if anything?

A I really don't recall a specific conversation, the details of any specific conversation in that regard.

Q Do you recall generally how you were going to treat the video and any statements that were made about the attack?

A As I said earlier, I think one of our goals was to lower the temperature in the world, in the region, and speak to widespread unrest, but beyond that, I don't recall any specific conversation.

Q It's our understanding, and at some point that night, and I think you said this, that Jake Sullivan came to your apartment?

A That's correct.

Q And there were others there as well?

A Correct.

Q For the record, could you identify those others?

A Yes. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], my speech-writing colleagues.

Q Were you aware that night that the State Department had put out a statement about the attacks in Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q How did you become aware of that statement?

A How did I become aware that it existed?

Q Yes.

A I don't recall.

Q Do you recall if Mr. Sullivan brought a copy of it with him?

A He did not bring a copy with him.

Q Why do you remember that?

A I don't remember him bringing a copy with him.

Q All right. Tell us about what occurred that evening in your apartment?

A So I invited [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] over. Jake had told me we had to start working on remarks for the Secretary, as we have discussed. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] came over, and we started brainstorming what those remarks could include. We brainstormed and discussed for a period of hours. Jake then joined us. And we sort of collectively sort of began drafting and revising and drafting the statement until, you know, sort of the middle of the night.

Q Other than Mr. Sullivan and the information he gave you,

what other sources of information did you have about what had occurred in Benghazi?

A Right. So Jake was the primary source of information that night. I think there were other internal State Department emails that provided additional information. For example, we had to eulogize our colleagues that we lost, and we needed to gather information about their professional history, but I could not otherwise give you details about what those emails were or anything like that, but Jake was the primary source of information.

Q Were you on the ops alert distribution list?

A Yes.

Q To the extent ops alerts were sent out that night, you would have had access to them?

A As far as I know. I don't know whether ops sent out alerts that I didn't get. I frequently got ops alerts, and I believe I got them that night.

Q In the course of your work on the Secretary's remarks, did you speak to anybody in the NEA Bureau?

A I didn't speak to anyone other than, in NEA or on the phone or anything like that. I think that we -- I really can't remember.

Q Did you speak to anybody that night about what had occurred in Benghazi other than Jake Sullivan and the folks that were in the room with you?

A I don't think so. I don't recall having any other conversation.

Q At any point in the evening, was the talk of the video discussed?

A Yes.

Q Okay. What do you recall about those discussions?

A I don't recall details of what we discussed, but I do recall, as I said, that it was in the context that we were approaching the night was there was this, there was unrest across the region and caused by the video, and that was the backdrop to which we were -- that was the context in which we were operating. So that would have been on my mind.

Q What do you mean by that was the context in which you were operating?

A I mean, I don't want to go back over everything I've said before, but --

Q I understand the facts that you were aware of. I understand that there was a protest in Cairo. What I don't understand is what you mean by "this was the context in which we were operating."

A So one of the goals of the Secretary's remarks, in addition to honoring those we lost, would be to try to express American determination in our values and to lower the temperature across the region, because of the -- and the reason we needed to lower the temperature was there was unrest across the region that was a potential threat to American interests.

Q I think I understand. So when you say "context," you didn't mean to suggest that you were attempting to link what had occurred in Cairo with what had occurred in Benghazi?

Mr. Su. Do you understand the question?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I'm not sure I understand the question.

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Well, you can make a statement in the context of what was happening in the region, or you could make a statement that suggests that there was a cause-and-effect relationship between what occurred in Cairo, and what occurred in Benghazi.

A Oh, I don't recall any conversation like that.

Mr. Su. Try to ask it this way: Do you recall any conversation that night in which there was an effort to link the issues in Cairo with the issues in Benghazi. Is that a fair --

Mr. Missakian. It's not actually what I'm asking. If you don't understand --

Mr. [REDACTED]. Do you want to clarify?

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q I'm just asking, trying to get clarification on the term "context" and how it's being used here. So do you recall any conversations in which it was discussed that what had occurred in Cairo was somehow linked to what had occurred in Benghazi?

A I don't recall a specific conversation like that.

Q Do you recall having -- generally, that that was a topic of discussion?

A I recall that that was the climate, the context, you know, of the day, but I don't recall a specific conversation, certainly not a specific conversation about cause or linkage, is what you asked. I

don't recall a conversation like that.

Q Let me ask you this then. Did you personally believe that what had occurred in Cairo that day was somehow connected to what had occurred in Benghazi?

A I'm trying to remember. I think that what I recall believing is, based on the information I had at the time, was that both events were playing out against the same backdrop of unrest across the region, and that is as far as my recollection goes of what I believed at the time.

Q Did you understand there to be protests outside the State Department facility in Benghazi prior to the facility attack that night?

A As I recall -- yes. Well, we should clarify that. It was hours after the attack. You know, I was learning information as the night went on, but at some point, I think that was my impression. I couldn't recall for you any details about that.

Q Okay. At some point that was your impression. At some point that night, or at some point in the days and weeks after?

A That night.

Q So was that your impression prior to finishing work on the statement?

A Yes.

Q And do you recall what that impression was based upon?

A I do not.

Q Do you recall if anybody else in the room shared that

impression?

A I wouldn't want to speak for anyone else. I couldn't speak for anyone else.

Q But you don't recall any discussions about it among the group?

A I don't recall any discussion.

Q All right. Tell us about the process of drafting the statement. For example, where did Jake Sullivan come into the process? Did you have an initial draft ready and then he came in and took part in editing? What was the chronology there, if you recall?

A As I said, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and I were there first. We were brainstorming. As part of the brainstorming process, we drafted sentences, paragraphs, moved things around. I don't recall when we had a rough draft, but it was largely a brainstorming process, and I couldn't tell you when Jake arrived or what the status of the draft, if any, was.

Q Do you recall that Mr. Sullivan had suggested mentioning the video in the statement prior to him arriving?

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

Q Do you recall anything he said on the subject once he got to your apartment?

A I just don't.

Q Do you recall anything anyone else said on the subject of the video during the evening?

A No. All these years later, I don't.

Q And in your mind, and I know you've talked about this, but just for the record -- well, let me do it this way: What I'd like to do is mark as exhibit 1 to this transcribed interview a multi-page document. This is the same document that was marked previously. I've got fewer copies now. We can share.

[REDACTED] Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Mr. [REDACTED], this is a multi-page document. The first page is an email at the top from Jake Sullivan to what we believe to be Hillary Clinton, September 24, 2012. The pages after the first email appear to be a compilation of statements made by the Secretary that involve some reference to the attacks in Benghazi. If you could just flip through this and identify if it's here, the statement that you worked on with the group on the evening of September 11 and into the morning of September 12?

A Yes. I don't see page numbers, so this, at the bottom corner is says State SEB0045476, remarks on the deaths of American personnel in Benghazi, Libya, September 12, 2012.

Q If you could, just take your attorney's pen and mark your initials next to the statement so the record is clear that that's the statement we're referring to.

Mr. Su. So for the record, he's marked that statement on that particular Bates number for the sole purpose of identifying the remarks that he participated in developing the night of September 11.

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Is that accurate?

A It is.

Q So let's flip to the second page in that series, fifth paragraph down, the paragraph that begins "There will be more time later to reflect." That paragraph. Do you see it?

A I do.

Q And the third sentence says, "We are working to determine the precise motivations and methods of those who carried out this assault." And then it continues, "Some have sought to justify this vicious behavior along with protests that took place at our Embassy in Cairo yesterday as a response to inflammatory material posted on the Internet." Do you see that sentence?

A I do.

Q Okay. What was the purpose for including that sentence in this statement?

A You read two sentences. Which one are you asking me about?

Q Thank you. What was the purpose for including the two sentences in the statement?

Mr. Su. And he is, of course, asking from your point of view, if you recall.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Right. You know, as I said earlier, the goals of our statement were to honor those who fell, to address the unrest in the region, to express American determination and adherence to our values. So these sentences were included to advance those goals, but

I couldn't tell you more about those specific sentences.

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q So at some point that evening, a draft of the statement was completed; and I understand that it was then circulated for review. Did you take part in that process of circulating the statement to others for review?

A Could you clarify what you mean by "taking part"?

Q For example, if [REDACTED] previously stated that she took the draft statement and sent it by email to others to review -- she couldn't remember who, but she recalled sending that -- possibly some of those individuals who received it may have sent comments back, and there may have been a back and forth about changes to the draft you all had prepared. So that's what I mean. Did you take part in the process of reviewing the statement that was prepared?

A Got it. In the morning I went over our draft with Jake again, and made edits in the morning.

Q And were the edits that were made based on conversations with anybody, or was it you woke up and looked at it and thought it could be said better?

A I did not have any other conversations with others. My understanding is that Jake did, but I don't know the details of those conversations.

Q Okay. Did he discuss those conversations with you?

A He said, you know, we have to keep making edits. He didn't tell me the substance of the conversations he had had, just that there

were more edits to make.

Q Okay. What kind of edits?

A I can't, you know, all these years later, tell you which sentences we changed, but the only thing that I remember is, I think the formulation "heavily-armed militants" we added that morning in his office. But I could not beyond that give you chapter and verse about what we changed.

Q So specifically, what line and paragraph are you referring to with that change? Do you recall?

A The second sentence of the statement.

Q So again, just so the record is clear, if you could borrow your attorney's pen and put brackets around the language that you recall being added the next morning.

A I have done so.

Q Thank you. Do you recall how that sentence read the night before?

A I do not.

Q Do you recall why that change was made?

A I do not.

Q What, if anything, did Mr. Sullivan say about why that change should be made?

A I don't recall. I don't recall the conversation. That's the only phrase that stuck in my memory as having been added that morning, but I don't recall why or how.

Q Why is it, do you think, you recall that particular change?

A I couldn't say.

Q Is that a term that you had used before, the term "heavily-armed militants"?

A That I had used before?

Q Yeah.

A I don't recall.

Q Is that language you believe that he suggested?

A Yes.

Q Did you have the sense that this change was a result of conversations he had had with other people within the State Department?

A We would have to ask him. He said, Here are the edits I want to make, and we made them.

Q And beyond that one, you can't recall any others?

A No.

Q Do you recall about what time that change was made? Obviously, it was before the remarks were given.

A Right. I think around 8 a.m., but I can't be sure.

Q Now if you could, flip to the second page. This is a page marked 45475 at the bottom.

A Yes.

Q There's a statement at the top, the title is "Statement on the Attack in Benghazi." The date is September 11, 2012. My understanding is this statement was issued by the State Department at 10 p.m. on September 11.

A Okay.

Q Prior to today, have you seen this statement?

A Yes.

Q When did you see it?

A I saw it when it came out, so around 10 o'clock.

Q So at 10 o'clock that night. I gather at that point you were at your apartment working on the statement?

A Yes.

Q Did you have any part in drafting the statement?

A You know, I really don't remember.

Q Do you recall this statement being discussed in the context of what would be written in the statement you did work on?

A What I recall about this is that it says we have confirmed that one of our State Department officers was killed. What I recall is we didn't know what had happened to Chris Stevens. And I recall knowing that the statement, this paper statement, would address the one person lost because we didn't know about what was the status of the second person. That's what I recall about it.

Q Okay. But as far as you sit here today, you had no part in the drafting or discussion about content?

A I'm not saying I didn't. I just don't recall.

Q Back to the review process of the statement that you did participate in. Do you recall anything about that other than your discussions with Mr. Sullivan the next morning?

A That's all I recall.

Q All right. What I'd now like to do is go through the other

statements in this compilation and ask you if you had any part in drafting them. So I think we can just go page by page here. We have already obviously done the two on the second page. I take that back. Let's go to the second one on the second page, "Statement on the Death of American Personnel in Benghazi, Libya." Did you take part in drafting that statement?

A I believe I did.

Q Okay. Let's skip ahead to the page marked 45478. Do you recall taking part in drafting that statement?

A Yes, I did.

Q Do you recall having any conversations with anybody about the content of this statement?

A Yes. I recall doing some research, I could not tell you with whom or where, to get the biographical information. And I recall asking for the appropriate way to refer to the employment status of these two men.

Q Let's flip to the next one. This is now the Remarks of the Opening Plenary of the U.S.-Morocco Strategic Dialogue, dated September 13, 2012. Did you take part in drafting any portion of this statement?

A I don't believe that I worked on this one.

Q Just generally, at any point during the week, that week, meaning September 11, all the way to the weekend, do you recall receiving any information about the identity of the attackers in Benghazi or their motivations?

RPTR KERR

EDTR ROSEN

[3:02 p.m.]

Mr. [REDACTED]. You say receive information?

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Yeah.

A No. I don't recall. I don't recall receiving information.

Q Do you recall receiving any classified briefings or classified intelligence reports during that week?

A No.

Q Is that something you normally would have received and reviewed?

A No.

Q All right. Let's keep going. Now we're at page 45482. The "Remarks at Reception Marking," if you can help me pronounce it.

A "Eid ul-Fitr."

Q Also dated September 13, 2012. Did you have any part in drafting any of the Secretary's remarks that are reflected here?

A I don't believe I had the pen on this one.

Q Okay. Let's flip forward then to page marked 45485. The title here, "Remarks at the Transfer of Remains Ceremony to Honor Those Lost in Attacks in Benghazi, Libya," now dated September 14, 2012. What role, if any, did you play --

A I did here. I did write these ones.

Q Did you have any discussions with anybody on the topic of how the identity of the attackers or their motive should be reflected in these remarks or were not reflected?

A I don't recall -- I don't recall any conversation like that.

Q Do you know one way or another whether or not Secretary Clinton herself reviewed the statement that you prepared on the night of September 11 before delivering it?

A Yes, she read it.

Q Okay. And how do you know that? Were you present?

A Yes.

Q Tell us about that. What happened?

A It was when we had a final draft, we printed it, handed it to her, she read it quietly, took a moment, and then walked out and delivered it.

Q All right. Do you know if she had had any input prior to that reading?

A I did not have any conversations with her. I don't know beyond that.

Q Do you know if Cheryl Mills had any input?

A I didn't have any conversations with her, and I don't know beyond that.

Q Please flip to page marked 45490. These are "Remarks With Indonesian Foreign Minister," dated September 20, 2012. Did you have any role in drafting any portion of these remarks?

A I honestly don't remember.

Q Okay. Let's flip to, now page 45495. These are "Remarks With Pakistani Foreign Minister," now dated September 21, 2012.

A I don't recall whether I wrote them or not.

Q Now, with regard to these remarks, in paragraph 5, we now see the word "terrorist attack" used and the word "terrorist." I read --

A I see it.

Q I read the other statements, and to my reading, those terms were not used prior to this statement on the 21st. I'm just going based on what's in this compilation.

Do you recall any discussions with regard to whether or not to use the word "terrorist" in connection with the Benghazi attacks at any point in time?

A I remember the President using the phrase "It was an act of terror" on the 12th, but I don't remember any internal conversation about the phrasing that we would use in those days.

Q Is that what you recall about the President's remarks, that he called it -- called it an act of terror?

A That's what I recall.

Q Okay. Have you read those statements recently?

A No.

Q So with regard to the use by the Secretary, are you suggesting that the word now appears in here because of the President's remarks?

A I'm not --

Q Why were you connecting it?

A I'm not suggesting that. I'm simply suggesting that I remember -- I remember him using that phrase. I do not remember -- I guess, I mention that because you asked about the word "terrorist." I do not remember any internal conversation about that word.

Q Do you remember any internal conversations about the use of that word divorced from what occurred in Benghazi just in general?

A You mean in other situations?

Q Sure, just in general in the State Department. Is there a word that could be used only in certain context, anything like that?

A No, it was used pretty interchangeably with "violent extremist" or other similar phrasing, so no, I don't remember it being, you know, not any particular conversation like that.

Q Okay. Could we go off the record for a second?

[Discussion off the record.]

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Let's go back on the record.

Mr. [REDACTED], now going beyond December 11 up to that following Sunday when Ambassador Rice appeared on the talk shows. Do you recall -- what do you recall, if anything, about discussing the role of the video in the attacks in Benghazi, whether there was a protest in Benghazi prior to the attack? Do you recall anything on those topics?

A In relation to Susan Rice?

Q No, not in relation to Susan Rice. I just use that as an

end point in the discussion. Just that week.

A Would you ask it again then?

Q Sure.

A I got distracted by the Susan Rice part.

Q Right. In the period between the morning of September 12th and Sunday, September 16th, do you recall taking part in any discussions where the topic of discussion was, in whole or in part, whether the video was connected to the attacks in Benghazi or whether there was a protest in Benghazi prior to the attacks?

A I really don't. I really do not remember a conversation like that.

Q Do you recall ever discussing what had occurred in Benghazi with anybody in the NEA bureau?

A In that time period?

Q Yes.

A I do not recall discussing -- if your question is -- I think how you put it was -- will you just say again whether was the motivations or what was the question?

Q Sure. Whether the video had any connection to what occurred in Benghazi or whether there was a protest in Benghazi prior to the attacks.

A I did not discuss with anyone in any -- I don't remember discussing with anyone in NEA those questions.

Q Now, at some point, did you come to learn that there was not, in fact, a protest that preceded the attacks in Benghazi?

A No, I never came to learn that, as far as I recall.

Q Okay. So my telling you that here today is the first time you are hearing that or learning that?

A I am aware of the controversy, and I'm aware -- I certainly recall hearing that topic hotly debated. I myself don't have independent knowledge and not sure. You know, at this point, I couldn't tell you anything beyond what's, you know, in the public record.

Q Okay. So just so I understand, at no point while you were employed at the State Department did you come to learn that there was no protest?

A Oh, no, no. Not that I recall.

Q Do you recall watching Ambassador Rice make her appearances on the Sunday talk shows?

A I don't believe I did watch that.

Q Afterwards, did you read any transcripts of her statements?

A I don't believe I read a -- ever read a full transcript of the interview. As a consumer of news, I was aware, you know, especially when it became a controversy, I was aware of that, and I, you know, certainly recall now I knew that she spoke to it.

Q So you do recall becoming aware of the controversy --

A Yes.

Q -- surrounding her remarks?

A Yes.

Q Again, just for the sake of the court reporter, one at a

time.

How did you become aware of that controversy?

A As I said, I'm a consumer of news and a follower of current events. Beyond that, I couldn't recall specifically where I read or learned about that controversy.

Q Do you recall having any discussions about it with your State Department colleagues?

A No, I do not.

Q What do you recall of the nature of the controversy to be?

A Well, from this removed, I recall there being public controversy over the word "spontaneous," and the -- I guess the word "protest," and I honestly don't remember the full extent of what she said beyond that, but I remember there being a controversy.

Q Okay. Was that a subject that was covered in preparing Secretary Clinton to appear before Congress in January 2013?

A I can only speak to my role, which was in helping with the opening statement, and I don't -- I have not gone back to review that, and I do not recall her -- it being in the opening statement, and I don't recall discussing it. But again, I haven't reviewed it, so I can't be sure.

Q Do you recall any discussions concerning the video, concerning the protest, concerning the motive of the attackers, anything like that in the context of preparing that statement for Congress?

A No, I don't recall that aspect of it.

Q Do you recall at all the administration's version of events changing over time?

Mr. Su. So that's a bit of a broad question. I'm not sure how he -- I mean --

Mr. Missakian. Why don't we give him a chance.

Mr. Su. Okay.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Do I recall the administration's version of the events changing over time, that's the question?

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Yes.

A I mean, I can really only speak for, you know -- well, I guess are you asking me like a consumer of news or as, like, in my role at the State Department?

Q We're just talking about you. I can get to how, you know, you learned of it later, but I'm just asking you, if you became aware of it?

Mr. Su. Well, Craig, I mean, I don't know how he answers that question, and I'll just say it again, I mean, is he aware of the -- in what capacity, do you have a specific point of reference? I'm just not sure how he -- and that assumes a fact that I'm not sure he's agreed to, which is that the administration did change positions, so, you know, if you ask a question, he'll answer it.

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q That's one way to answer it. You can say, "Mr. Missakian, I'm not aware of any change in the administration's version of what

occurred in Benghazi." Is that your testimony here today?

A No. I mean, I'm -- you know, as I recall -- I mean, the Secretary said on the 12th, we are learning about the motivations and methods of what -- of the attackers here, and I believe that to be true and that, you know, I didn't -- I was not involved in this, but I believe the senior officials to have -- continue to do their best to fill in the information with the picture of the information they had, but I only say that as a consumer of news, and from years later trying to remember, you know, what was said when in public, but I can't really say much more than that.

Q Okay. So I just want to understand. Are you aware that the administration's version of events changed over time? And that's a simple yes-or-no question. If you're not aware of it, please say it, and we'll move on.

A I am aware that the administration -- you know, that more was learned over time, but that's -- beyond that, I really -- I'm not aware of who learned what when. I just don't know.

Q Do you recall having any conversations with anybody about anything Susan Rice said on the Sunday talk shows?

A No.

Q Do you recall having any conversations with anybody about how to -- I'll withdraw that question. Did Susan Rice's comments factor in at all in the statements the Secretary was making about the Benghazi attacks?

A Not that I worked on, not that I know of.

Q Thank you. I don't have any further questions.

A Thank you.

Ms. Sawyer. I think, if you'd just give us a sec to switch seats, we can do it, and make sure everyone has water and what else they need, and I don't know that we need a lengthy break or anything, unless you are going to --

Mr. Su. We are ready.

Ms. Sawyer. Good.

Mr. Kenny. Mr. [REDACTED], you all set?

Mr. [REDACTED]. I am.

Mr. Kenny. You guys good? We'll go back on the record. The time now reads 3:13. This will begin the majority's portion of the questioning, and --

Mr. Chipman. Minority's.

Mr. Kenny. I'm sorry. For one, I could strike that. The minority's questioning. Thank you for the clarification.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. KENNY:

Q Mr. [REDACTED], just on behalf of Ranking Member Cummings and all the Democrat members, we would like to take the opportunity to thank you for appearing here today, and extend the remarks that were issued to you earlier. We know that the attacks have taken a toll on many in the Department and those who view the Department as a family, and so obviously, we want to try to be as respectful as possible, while at the same time, gathering information the committee deems is

necessary in order to conclude its investigation.

Just take a quick moment to reintroduce myself. My name is Peter Kenny. I'm with the minority staff. I'm joined here by chief counsel, Heather Sawyer. And again, we just appreciate your willingness to be here today. Thank you.

A Thank you.

Q I'd like to pick up where we left in the last round, where we were walking through a series of statements that the Secretary had issued. They're either statements, public remarks, speeches. This is exhibit 1. You were asked to comment or describe your participation in a series of -- the succession of these. And for a number of these, I had in my notes that you couldn't recall whether you participated, or you couldn't recall the extent to which you may have made specific edits and specific line edits to the speeches, to the remarks.

And I was hoping just to get your sense, you know, we are 3 years removed now from the events in question, and I was just wondering whether -- the passage of time, whether you could just provide for us, generally, your sense of your recollection of those specific edits and of the night in general, just based on the passage of time?

A Are you asking about the edits to the statement on the morning of September 12th?

Q So for any of these where you've identified that you did participate, and you were asked about specific edits you may have had, I thought I recall you indicating that you didn't have specific recollection about some of those, and so my question to you is just,

I thought I'd heard that you referenced back that this has now been 3 years, and so my question to you is whether the passage of time, how that's affected your ability to recollect, with specificity, these edits you've been asked about?

A Oh, yes. Well, it has been 3 years. I wrote a lot of words in this job. These are some of them. And I cannot now, you know -- there are certain phrases that I remember having worked on, but I can't, you know, all these years later, you know, really go through and say, well, this edit happened for this reason or not. It's just beyond my memory.

Q No, thank you. That's helpful. You know, as we understand it, the Secretary operates in a very public role as the face for the administration and implementer of our foreign policy. And so our understanding is also that she or he would also issue a number of statements or remarks frequently. Is that accurate?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay. And then over the course of your tenure, you said you were at the State Department for 4 years, I believe?

A Correct.

Q And a speech writer for that entire period?

A Yes. I spent 2 years in the Office of Strategic Communications in the Bureau of Public Affairs, and 2 years in the speech writing office of Policy Planning, but my responsibilities all 4 years were as a speech writer to the Secretary.

Q Okay. And during your 4 years as a speech writer, whether

serving in one office or the other, do you have any recollection of how many speeches or statements you may have worked on, you may have prepared yourself?

A Gosh, a lot. I couldn't give you a number, but you are correct. She -- the Secretary spoke frequently, issued many paper statements also, and I had a hand in many of them, and so I couldn't begin to count, actually, but a lot.

Q Would you say dozens?

A Hundreds. Several each week.

Q And sitting here today, if I were to show you the final version of either a statement or a prepared speech, do you think you'd be able to share with us what specific edits or what that editing process was like for that speech, just as a general matter?

A Some are more memorable than others, but it's been so many years that it's very difficult to go back and reconstruct how, you know, specifically step by step how a speech gets edited, especially when you've written so many and it's been so many years.

Q When you say some may be more memorable than others, would you count these types of statements or speeches in that regard?

A I would say that the remarks of September 12th were memorable, important, but what I also said it was, which is it has been 3 years, and I don't remember all the specifics of which edit, of each edit.

Q Okay. Thank you. Just roughly, briefly, before we move on, and I know that there was a question about the word "context" in

the last hour.

A Yeah.

Q Context is something that we generally find to be helpful in understanding the events and circumstances surrounding the events of the attacks, as well as the administration's response. And I was hoping whether you could help us understand what sorts or types of challenges you, in the speech writing office, and your colleagues in the speech writing office, were facing during this period, and by this period, I mean from when you learned of the attacks through the last of the remarks or speeches that you were shown in exhibit 1?

A Well, you know, as I said earlier, you know, one of the -- part of the context here was unrest across the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond, protests in many countries sparked by an inflammatory video. There was a scary situation in Tunisia at our embassy. There was a scary situation in Sudan. There were protests in many countries.

Q Uh-huh.

A Part of my job as a speech writer in that period was to help craft remarks for the Secretary that would address that instability, lower the temperature, deny oxygen to -- or limit the oxygen to these issues, not inflame the situation more, and as I said, to express American determination and our values.

Q You used a phrase just a moment ago about not giving oxygen, or denying oxygen to these events. Could you just elaborate on what you mean by that?

A I just mean you have to decide, when you're speaking to a global audience, and for me, as a speech writer, as I'm helping prepare remarks for a global audience, the tone that you're going to take, which issues you're going to address and with which prominence, and sometimes it is helpful to talk about -- to take on a problem and sort of work your way through it, and sometimes doing that and talking a lot about an issue that's causing, say, unrest will just draw more attention to it and cause more unrest, and so you have to try to calibrate and balance in your public remarks, in your public presentation, the right way to do that to advance U.S. interests and values around the world, and so that's what I mean by oxygen.

Sometimes, you know, the job of the speech writer and communications, in general, you know, in that global setting, is to strike that right balance on sort of behalf of American interests.

Q Thank you. That's helpful. In the last round, you had also indicated, or you had referenced the burning of a Koran before, and what specifically were you referring to?

A I recall an incident in -- there was a pastor in Florida who threatened to burn a Koran and drew worldwide notice, and then I think eventually did. And also, through worldwide notice, these were issues, you know, of concern, for me at least.

Q And was that something that you had specifically dealt with in your capacity as a speech writer at the Department?

A I don't recall now in this room whether I ever wrote something about that, but I remember being aware and concerned about

it.

Q You were asked about your general awareness of when a YouTube video may have begun circulated, or first been posted onto YouTube as well as the effect that that may have on the region. I would just like to ask, were you aware -- I just want to drill down a little bit -- that the video had been posted on YouTube that summer? Was that something that you're aware of?

A You know, as I said earlier, I can't remember now the chronology of when I became aware of the video's existence, when I became aware that it was causing unrest in the region, and when various protests started across the region. I am -- what I recall now is that in that period, there -- that it was causing significant unrest around the world. That's what I remember.

Q I would like to shift to your recollection of the drafting process on the night of the 11th and the morning -- into the early morning of the 12th. You described a drafting session that occurred, took place at your residence, and I recall you were being asked a specific question about press reporting that night, and I wanted to reconcile that, because I thought I later heard you say that you were a consumer of the press. And I believe I had my notes that you didn't have a specific recollection of a specific news report from that night, but do you remember generally being aware of press reporting on the night of the attacks?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And what's the basis for that recollection? Do you

recall there perhaps being a television on in the background that news alerts would have been coming into somebody's inbox?

A I do not recall a television being on, but -- and I do not recall a specific news story that I would have -- that I read that night, but I do recall being on the Internet, you know, reading -- I don't recall any specifics, but I do recall sort of there is an event unfolding, I was interested to know what the -- what was in the public domain, what are people saying about it. That is, of course, if you're a speech writer, that's important context to know, what is the climate in which you're writing.

Q So if I understand you correctly, it sounds like in order to do your job effectively, you need to be reading for this.

A Yes, yes.

Q Okay. And so your understanding is you would have then been reading the news; you just don't have a specific recollection?

A I do not have a specific recollection of I read this story, I read that story.

Q If you could take a look at -- referring back to exhibit 1. So these are the remarks, and I just -- just so the record is completely clear, these are the remarks that I believe you indicated that you had participated in the drafting of at your residence, and these are the same remarks that the Secretary then delivered on camera?

A The ones marked, "Remarks on the Death of American Personnel in Benghazi, Libya, September 12th, 2012."

Q Okay. And to the extent that there are two statements that

preceded here in this chronology, which was prepared by [REDACTED], it appears, was your understanding that there had been two public statements that had been issued prior to the delivery of these remarks?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A These are paper statements. The first -- the remarks on the 12th are the ones that she delivered in person.

Q And in the last round, you described what you viewed as the purpose of the goals that these remarks -- that these remarks would serve. I guess, well, let me ask my question this way: Was one of the purposes to deliver a definitive accounting of the attacks that took place that night?

A No.

Q To provide every single detail about the attacks?

A No.

Q Okay. And to the extent that you would include factual information about the attacks, how did you decide which information you should include?

A It's a good question. I think it is definitely true, as just discussed, that the goal was not to provide a definitive accounting of the facts, and, you know, as she said, we were still -- there would be time to reflect later and that we were still learning about the motivations and methods.

So, I think we were -- that was our -- that was our guide. We -- and I can't recall conversations about specifically put this fact

in, don't put this fact in, but I do recall that sentiment, that we didn't need to provide a definitive accounting of the facts, and that that was not the goal of this statement, and that we -- there would be time to reflect later and that we were still learning about motivations and methods.

So we said all that, and beyond that, I can't recall, you know, the specific in-and-out discussion.

Q And in a statement like this, you know, you were directed to the fifth paragraph on the second page. It appears to be towards the bottom of the speech. As a speech writer, would you generally tend to, when you wrote a speech for the Secretary to deliver, put the most important information up front for the Secretary to deliver? In other words, is there some meaning to how information is presented in a speech in the order in which it's presented?

A I wouldn't want to draw too broad a generalization about that. As a -- different speeches have different structure.

Q What about here? And the reason I'm asking, the very first paragraph, the first two sentences indicate that there was an attack, and then that second sentence, which you were asked about in the previous round reads, quote, "Heavily armed militants assaulted the compound and set fires to our buildings," close quote. And you know, to us, our reading, that appears to be a fairly strong statement that's up front, and I just was trying to get your sense, or your reaction, to why language like that would be inserted not only in the speech, but at the beginning, very beginning of the speech?

A So, I think the balance that as a speech writer, I would try to strike in this situation is between what we just said, which is the goal of this speech is not -- or these remarks are not to provide a definitive factual record.

The goals are, as I said earlier, to honor those who fell, to express American determination and values, to lower the temperature around the world, and speak to a global audience, balanced against the need that the audience needs to know what she's talking about. So the audience was waking up in the morning, and the Secretary is giving remarks. The first two sentences reflect, you don't know what we're talking about, we're telling you what we're talking about, but beyond that, I think, you know, that's the balance to strike.

Q Okay. And -- so I would like to direct your attention now to the language that you referred to in the last hour, the sentence reads, quote, "Some have sought to justify this vicious behavior along with the protest that took place at our embassy in Cairo yesterday as a response to inflammatory material posted on the Internet," close quote.

And you've been asked your opinions, your beliefs about a protest, about a video, about whether -- the use of the word "terrorism," your recollection of that. And my question to you is, this sentence here, which is substantially similar to the sentence that appears in the very first public statement, did you view that as in competition with the first or second sentence of the remarks?

RPTR YORK

EDTR ROSEN

[3:32 p.m.]

Mr. [REDACTED]. Not at all.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q Okay. So it was accurate, or did you believe it to be accurate both that this first, I'm sorry, the second sentence, "Heavily-armed militants assaulted the compound and set fire to our buildings, and some have sought to justify this vicious behavior as a response to inflammatory materials on the Internet." You viewed both of those as accurate at the time?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

Ms. Sawyer. Did you view them in any way as mutually exclusive?

Mr. [REDACTED]. No. I didn't then and I don't now. I think that, you know, what I believed then is what the Secretary said, which is we were still learning about the motivations and methods. And I don't today, sitting here, claim to have any, you know, perfect knowledge about motivations of every person who participated in that attack. But there doesn't seem to me today to be any contradiction between some people -- some people being motivated having multiple motivations, or some being motivated by one thing and another by another thing. I don't see any contradiction between -- and certainly not between the fact that some have sought to justify the suspicious behavior with the idea that there were heavily-armed militants there.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q So you've been asked a little bit about specific underlying information to support or undergird your beliefs. And I'd just like to ask, at the time, do you recall having some sort of evidentiary basis in order to confirm that those statements were accurate?

A I relied primarily for information on Jake Sullivan. And was guided by the best information I had at the time.

Q And would that have been inappropriate in these circumstances? Can you just describe for us, for instance, the relationship between the speech writing team and Jake Sullivan, who I understand was the deputy chief of staff and later became also the director for policy planning.

A And by this point was director of policy planning.

He was our boss. The speech writing staff was housed in the Office of Policy Planning. Jake was the director of policy planning. He was very hands-on in the speech writing process. He was our primary conduit for guidance on policy and what was the Secretary's -- what the Secretary wanted to say at any given day. And so it was both appropriate and not unusual that I would rely on a him as my primary source of information.

Q And with specific respect to these remarks which were delivered in the treaty room on September 12, do you recall anyone either in your original drafting session or later raising concerns that any of the information here or any proposed edits were inaccurate?

A No. I do not recall anything like that.

Q Okay. And just to close out, this speech we had talked about some of the goals that you believed were your guiding principles for drafting this speech. And I'd just like to ask: Was it your opinion at the time that you felt that these remarks fulfilled those goals?

A Yes.

Q And just to follow up a little bit with that, and you may have already answered this question, but the specific line "some have sought to justify," if you've already explained it, I apologize. But explain to us how that line fit in with the overall goals that you described earlier?

A One of the goals that I mentioned for these remarks was to address a global audience and lower the temperature in a period of unrest across North Africa, the Middle East, and the Muslim world. That unrest was related to the inflammatory video. And so this sentence related to that goal.

I also mentioned the goal of being -- reaffirming American values in the world. And I think that this part of the speech was about that as well.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q So in terms of you said sometimes there's a balance between fighting, not with specific regard to this speech, but overall, when to mention something in order to lower the temperature, and when not to mention in order to deny -- I think the phrase you used was deny oxygen to the issue?

A Right.

Q I don't know if there was concrete -- I'm not asking you necessarily whether you recall the concrete discussions about that balance here, but was there a sense that it was more important to mention it than to deny it, oxygen at this point in time, by refusing to mention it?

A I think that -- and, again, I don't recall the specific conversations that night about this. But I think where we ended up reflected our best judgment about that balance.

Q And that could have been a decision that changed over time, that balance and whether it was -- as the days progressed --

A Absolutely.

Q -- as to whether --

A We were dealing with -- over the course of the following days and weeks, we were dealing with an unfolding situation. As I said, there were incidents at other embassies in other countries, in Tunisia and Sudan and elsewhere. It was an ongoing global crisis. And as I worked on remarks throughout the following days and weeks, that was an ongoing discussion about how best to address that situation.

Q So a decision as to whether or not to mention, for example, the issues around the video in a particular speech versus deciding not to mention it, from your perspective, was driven by the factors that you've articulated here?

A Absolutely.

Q Were they ever driven by a desire to downplay the potential

role of extremists or terrorists with particular regard to Benghazi, because that's the one that the accusation has been made -- the calculus as to when to talk about the video and when not, were they ever driven by a desire to downplay the role of terrorists?

A No.

Q To deny that there might have been terrorists involved in the attack?

A No. I was never part of a conversation like that. I certainly don't recall any, that being something that was discussed.

BY MR. KENNY:

Q I'd like to move forward. And I'll direct your attention to -- it's Bates number SCB -- or document number SCB0045485. This is the September 14 ramp ceremony remarks.

A Yes.

Q And I believe you indicated that you had drafted this speech. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And could you just describe for us what the goals of this speech were. You mentioned that previously with the treaty room remarks, could you just describe generally what this speech was to accomplish?

A Sure. The goals were similar. But in this case, overwhelmingly, the goal was to honor those we had lost. Secondly, as with the previous remarks, we were still speaking to a global audience. We were speaking in the middle of an ongoing crisis, a period

of instability. So the primary goal was to honor those we lost. Secondary goal was to address that global audience and the ongoing events in the region and beyond.

Q And to your knowledge, do you recall whether it was important for the Secretary to attend this event?

A Yes. I mean, you know, it depends based on whose judgement. I guess if you are asking my judgment, I thought it was --

Q Please.

A -- important that she go. We had lost colleagues, and it was -- I went, and it was -- and a lot of other people did too. And it was an important moment.

Q I'd like to direct your attention on the second page about four paragraphs in. And this paragraph, the last sentence reads, quote, "The president of the Palestinian Authority who worked closely with Chris when he served in Jerusalem sent me a letter remembering his energy and integrity, and deploring, and I quote, 'an act of ugly terror,' close quote. Many others from across the Middle East and North America have offered similar sentiments," closed quote.

A North Africa.

Q North Africa. I apologize. "Have offered similar sentiments," close quote. It appears here that the Secretary, although not in her direct voice, refers to an act of ugly terror. Is that your understanding as well?

A Yes.

Q And do you recall whether that specific phrase was included

in the first draft of the speech that you prepared?

A Gosh. I can't remember the draft, how many -- whether this went through multiple -- I mean, I don't remember the first draft, so I couldn't say.

Q Do you remember any concern being raised about including that specific phrase?

A No. I do not recall any concern about that.

Q In the last round you were asked about the use of the term "terrorist," and you had mentioned, or indicated that you viewed that term somewhat interchangeably, I believe, with "extremists." Is that --

A Violent extremists.

Q -- is that right? Violent extremists.

A It was a common phrase in our lexicon.

Q Okay. Thank you. So you were asked about your awareness of the controversy surrounding what Ambassador Rice had said on the five Sunday talk shows September 16. There also has been some public controversy over some of the Secretary's remarks. And I would just would like to begin by asking how you feel when you see or read those criticisms. And they may be particular statements or remarks that you had drafted. How do you feel when you see criticisms that they may be inaccurate or that were said they were intentionally inaccurate?

A How I feel now today?

Q Sure.

A Are you -- well, I think as I said earlier, I don't see any

contradiction between what was -- you know, what we wrote in those remarks and what she said that this was an ugly act of terror, that there were heavily-armed militants, that there were some who sought to justify events because of an inflammatory video. I don't see any contradiction there. I feel proud of the remarks we wrote and the Secretary's leadership during a difficult time. Feel proud of my colleagues who pulled together, you know, after they lost friends and colleagues. And, you know, that's the -- that's -- when I look back, that's what I remember.

Q So sitting here today, you're proud of the work that you accomplished?

A Absolutely.

Q Okay. It's further been alleged the administration created a false narrative with respect to the YouTube video that caused so much unrest, and insinuating that it played a direct role in the attack. And, again, I'd just like to ask for your response to that allegation and your thought on whether the administration created a false narrative?

A I never heard anyone talk about anything like that. I never heard anyone talk about this in the context of politics. I never heard anyone say let's do anything other than be guided by the best information we have, and serve the American people the best we can. And so, no, I think that's way off base.

Q And just to follow up on that, anyone else you worked with on this speech, any speech or any statement that was related to the

Benghazi attacks, are you aware of anybody made any changes that were known at that time to be false?

A Never. I am not aware of any -- I mean, I can only speak for myself. But I certainly didn't do that. And I'm not aware of anyone else doing that either.

Q Okay. And so no one ever pressured you to make changes to any statement or speech about the Benghazi attacks that you believe to be false?

A Absolutely not.

Q And no one told you that they had been pressured to make changes that they knew were false?

A Absolutely not.

Q Okay. So at this point, we're going to shift gears a little bit, and in moving to this next section, I'll just preface by saying that this is the eighth Congressional investigation into the Benghazi attacks. And we feel certainly that it's our duty to ensure that it's the last. And in order to do that, we've been asking every witness about a series of public allegations that have been made since the attacks. It's our understanding that even where they have been answered by other investigations, our colleagues in the majority are pursuing them. And that's why we continue to ask about them. While anyone can speculate about the Benghazi attacks, and plenty of people have, only a limited universe of people have actual knowledge or evidence of what happened before, during, and after the attacks.

What I'm going to ask you for is not your opinion or speculation,

but just whether you have any firsthand information. If you don't, we'll simply move to the next allegation. And there's about a dozen of these. So please bear with me.

First, it's 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,'" closed 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 I do not.

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. I don't.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April 2012 cable denying security to Libya. The Washington Post Fact Checker evaluated the 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, I don't.

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

A No, I don't.

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

A No, I don't. And I hadn't heard that one.

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 Syrian," close quote, and that they found, quote, "no support for this allegation," close 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, I don't.

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. I don't.

Q A team of CIA security personnel was temporarily delayed

from departing the annex to assist the Special Mission Compound on the night of the attacks. And there have been a number of allegations about the cause of and appropriateness of that delay.

The House Intelligence Committee issued a bipartisan report concluding the team was not ordered to stand down, but that 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 I do not.

Q Putting aside whether you personally agree with the decision, or you feel it was right, 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, I don't.

Q 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 or provided to the ARB?

A No. I don't.

Q Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department directed to anyone else at the State Department to remove or scrub

damaging document from the materials that were provided to the ARB?

A No.

Q Let me ask you 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 And it has been alleged that the CIA Deputy Director Mike Morell altered unclassified talking points about the Benghazi attacks for political reasons, and that he then misrepresented his actions when he told Congress and the CIA 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 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 representation 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, quote, "virtually AWOL as commander in chief," close quote, on the night of the attacks, and that he was, quote, "missing in action," close quote.

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 were considering flying on a second plane to Benghazi were ordered by their superiors to, quote, "stand down," close quote, meaning to cease all operations. Military officials have stated that those four individuals were instead ordered to, quote, "remain in place," closed quote, 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 the U.S. military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi," closed quote.

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

A No.

Q Last one. It has been alleged that the military failed to deploy assets on the night of the attacks 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," closed quote.

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

A No. I do not.

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 the Pentagon leadership intentionally decided not to deploy?

A No.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q I think we're just about done. We appreciate your time. I don't know if our colleagues have some follow-up. But in terms of -- you've, I think, done a nice job giving us a generalized sense of kind of the factors that would go into what was included in any particular speech and explaining that those might have evolved over time.

Today, you were shown only final versions of speeches. And that

was my understanding as well with Ms. [REDACTED]. You weren't shown any drafts. You know, it's my understanding that the committee does have, at least in some instances, drafts. With regard to those, we've reviewed them. We did not -- we thought they were mostly self-explanatory. But had the committee had a question about any particular draft on a document in our possession, would you have been willing and able to try to explain to us with regard to things like seeking to achieve these goals, learn the temperature versus denying an issue oxygen, seeking not to inflame the situation anymore, displaying American resolve, to the best of your recollection, based on an actual document, what factored into it?

A You know, based on my best recollection, I would try to be as helpful as I could. But, you know, as I said, it's hard 3 years later to reconstruct edit by edit. But I would be -- you know, so within my recollection, I would answer as best I could.

Q And just in the more general sense, without having a particular edit, these were the standards that you feel governed the speech writing at the time?

A Yes.

Q And I know it sounds like a strange question. It is a little strange. But I ask it in part, and I do want this on the record because we have, over the course of this investigation, asked for and received a number of documents from the State Department. We continue to press for more, and I'm sure we will continue to get more. But I do want the record to reflect that you were here, you were willing, you're

available to talk --

A Yes.

Q -- about any document in our possession that we had questions about?

A Yes.

Mr. Kenny. I think that concludes our round. And with that, we can go off the record.

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. Missakian. Back on the record.

BY MR. MISSAKIAN:

Q Mr. [REDACTED], I should have asked you this before. On the evening of September 11, there was a secure video teleconference at the State Department that began at 7:30 that we understand. Did you participate in that?

A No.

Q Did anyone discuss with you anything that was discussed during that call?

A No.

Q Are you aware that it even occurred?

A Not that I'm aware of.

I am, in retrospect -- sitting here, I'm aware of it. I was not then.

Q Now, you were asked some questions in response to which you said something to the effect that the statement we've been looking at, which is focused on in Exhibit 1, which is a statement that was prepared

on the evening of September 11, and then given the next morning on September 12, that your goal was not to give a definitive accounting of what had occurred during the attacks. Do you recall giving that answer?

A I believe I recall that exchange. I think I said that it wasn't the goal to provide a definitive accounting of all the facts or something like that. We can look at the transcript.

Q Right. I may have not gotten it exactly right.

Why was that not a goal?

A The goal of the statement -- the goals of the statement were, as I said, you know, to honor those who we lost, to express American determination and values, to address the global audience and ~~period of instability, lower the temperature.~~ And, you know, my role was, as a speech writer, was to help achieve those goals. The Secretary, you know, her role as the representative of the United States to the rest of world, those were her -- you know, as I understood them, those were her goals. So it was not -- you know, so those were the goals, and I don't think the other one was. It would be left to others.

Q So if I understand your testimony, the goal as you understood for that statement came directly from the Secretary?

A Well, they came from Jake. And Jake was my primary source of information and sort of what -- of information and of sort of guidance of what would be appropriate to provide for the Secretary.

Q I understand that. But you described them as her goals, meaning Secretary Clinton's. Were they Secretary Clinton's goals or

were they Jake Sullivan's goals?

A They were the goals that Jake communicated to me would be appropriate for the Secretary -- you know, for the remarks. So I did not have any independent conversation with the Secretary.

Q Do you have any basis for believing that Mr. Sullivan discussed the goals for the speech with the Secretary before communicating them to you?

A I don't know. I really couldn't say whether he talked to her or not. I don't know.

Q All right. So it wasn't that you all had a discussion and made a decision not to include an accounting of what had occurred, that was just not included in the set of goals that were communicated to you by Mr. Sullivan?

A That's generally right. I don't recall a specific conversation like that. What I do recall is, as I think I said earlier, is that, you know, we discussed, you know, striking the right balance in his remarks of advancing those goals. And being, you know, being guided by the best information we had, and -- and it's -- so, right. Exactly. I don't remember a specific conversation, in answer to your question.

Q On the night of the attack, were you aware that there was a separate CIA facility that had come under attack?

A I don't recall being aware of that that night. I'm aware of it now, but I don't recall being aware of it then.

Q Okay. I think you were asked some questions about whether

or not you were aware of the news reports that night. We know that you're a consumer of news. It's part of your job. Did you use anything you read in any of those news reports in any of the remarks that you drafted?

A I don't -- I don't remember any specific -- I don't remember drawing any kind of specific insight from any news reports that would have been reflected in the draft.

Mr. Missakian. That's it. Thank you.

Mr. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

Mr. Kenny. Off the record.

[Whereupon, at 4:04 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

(4:04 p.m.)

Errata Sheet

Select Committee on Benghazi

The witness' counsel on behalf of the witness reviewed the accompanying transcript, certified its accuracy, and declined to provide corrections to the transcript.