

RPTR KERR

EDTR ROSEN

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

INTERVIEW OF: GENE A. CRETZ

FRIDAY, July 31, 2015

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-302,
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 10:06 a.m.

Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

DANA CHIPMAN, CHIEF INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

SHARON JACKSON, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

SHERIA CLARKE, COUNSEL

HEATHER SAWYER, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

PETER KENNY, MINORITY SENIOR COUNSEL

KENDAL ROBINSON, MINORITY DETAILEE

For the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

AUSTIN EVERS, SENIOR ADVISOR

Ms. Clarke. This is a transcribed interview of Ambassador Gene Cretz as 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. Ambassador, would you please state your name for the record?

Mr. Cretz. Gene A. Cretz.

Ms. Clarke. And the committee appreciates your appearance at this interview. My name is Sheria Clarke, and I'm with the committee's majority staff, and we'll just take a moment to go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves.

Mr. Cretz. Okay.

Ms. Jackson. And I'm Sharon Jackson. I'm also with the majority staff. Good morning to you.

Mr. Chipman. I'm Dana Chipman with the majority staff as well.

Ms. Robinson. Kendal Robinson with the minority staff.

Ms. Sawyer. Heather Sawyer with the minority staff.

Mr. Kenny. Peter Kenny with the minority staff.

Mr. Evers. Austin Evers, State Department.

Ms. Clarke. Thank you. Before we begin, I'd like to go over the ground rules and explain how the interview will proceed. Generally, the way the questioning has proceeded is that a member of the majority will ask questions for up to an hour and then the minority will have an opportunity to ask questions as well.

Questions may only be asked by a member of the committee or designated staff members, and will rotate back and forth, 1 hour per side, until we are out of questions and the interview will be finished.

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

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

Mr. Cretz. Uh-huh.

Ms. Clarke. -- of the process.

As you know, we are in a room that is cleared up to top secret level. The way that we'll proceed today is we hope to begin in an unclassified setting, so we'll ask you questions that are unclassified. If for any reason you feel that the answer to that question needs to be classified, just let us know, and then we'll take an opportunity to address it at a later time during our interview.

Mr. Cretz. Okay.

Ms. Clarke. You're welcome to confer with your counsel at any time throughout the interview. If something needs to be clarified, you just -- we ask that you make that known. If you need to discuss

anything with your counsel, we'll go off the record and stop the clock to provide you this opportunity.

We also would like to take a break whenever it's convenient for you. This can be after every hour of questioning or after a couple of rounds, whichever you prefer. If you need anything, a glass of water, coffee, just let us know, and we'll be sure to get you some.

Mr. Cretz. Great.

Ms. Clarke. We want to make this process as easy and as comfortable for you. As you can see, an official reporter is taking down everything said today, so we ask that you give verbal responses to all questions, yes and no, as opposed to nods of the head. I'm going to ask the reporter to please step in if she sees that you, or either I or you are not giving verbal responses.

We should also both try not to talk over each other so it's easier to get a clear record. We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and truthful manner possible, so we'll take our time and repeat or clarify our questions if necessary. And if you have any questions, again, you know, feel free to stop us to clarify those.

If you don't know the answer to a question or you don't remember, it's best not to guess. Just give us your best recollection, and if there are things you don't know or don't remember but you have -- you know someone that may be able to inform us of those answers, if you'll provide those names, we appreciate that.

Mr. Cretz. Uh-huh.

Ms. Clarke. You are required to answer questions from Congress

truthfully. Do you understand that?

Mr. Cretz. Yes.

Ms. Clarke. This also applies to questions posed by congressional staff in a interview. Do you also understand that?

Mr. Cretz. Yes.

Ms. Clarke. Witnesses that knowingly provide false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury for making false statements. Do you understand that?

Mr. Cretz. Yes.

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

Mr. Cretz. No.

Ms. Clarke. All right. That's the end of my preamble.

Does the minority have anything they want to add?

Ms. Sawyer. Not at this time. Thanks.

Mr. Evers. Can we go off the record for just a quick second?

Ms. Clarke. Yes.

[Discussion held off the record.]

Ms. Clarke. And the time now is 10:12, so we'll begin with our first hour of questioning.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Mr. Ambassador, can you just give us a brief professional overview of your professional background with the State Department?

A Sure. I joined the State Department in 1981. I've served

overseas in Islamabad, Damascus twice, New Delhi, Tel Aviv twice, Beijing, Cairo, Libya, and Ghana. I was also -- in the State Department, I served as a staff assistant to the NEA bureau, tour in the operation center. I was an officer for the IOUNP office, which is the International Organization's United Nations Political Affairs, and I also served as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State during the time I was waiting for confirmation for my ambassadorship to Libya, and I served as ambassador to Libya and to Ghana, and I just retired 1 month ago.

Q Congratulations on your retirement, and thank you for your service to our country.

So I just wanted to talk with you kind of what -- about what the reporting structure is like within the State Department for an ambassador. When you are an ambassador to the -- to a country, who do you report to? Do you report directly to individuals within the NEA bureau? Do you report to -- directly to senior leadership? Could you kind of describe that reporting structure?

A Yeah. Normally, we report directly to the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau.

Q And are there instances where you would report outside of that reporting structure?

A Rarely, but it can occur.

Q And what -- what types of incidents will require you to report outside of that structure?

A Well, if there was a, for example, on a farewell message,

for example, as an ambassador departing a country, I would normally address my last cable to the Secretary. But beyond that, very rarely would there be a -- an instance where we would not at least start the chain of reporting with the Assistant Secretary.

Q If there were -- if you started a chain of reporting with the Assistant Secretary, but that information needed to go further, would that be something in your role as ambassador that you would provide or would the Assistant Secretary provide -- send that information further?

A We could recommend to the Assistant Secretary that they -- that they bring this higher if they weren't going to, for example. I mean, we have ways to make sure that our reporting gets as -- the kind of high-level attention that we want it to.

Q And what -- what are some of those ways?

A Well, there's a -- it's been very rare in my career, quite honestly --

Q Okay.

A -- that an Assistant Secretary would not push forward information that I had recommended go to a higher level. I think, really, in the State Department, generally, probably happens very rarely that an ambassador and a Assistant Secretary would differ on that particular issue.

Q What about coordination with other executive branch agencies? In your role as ambassador, are you involved with coordinating information between other agencies?

A Yes.

Q And can you kind of describe what that coordination would normally look like?

A Are you talking in an embassy setting?

Q As an ambassador, yes.

A Yeah.

Q Whether in the embassy setting, what is your -- how do you coordinate or interact with other agencies such as NSS, DOD, et cetera?

A We have a country team. We operate on a country team basis, which basically involves all the heads of agencies and heads of departments, and we meet regularly. It depends on the ambassador, it depends on the embassy, and it's through that, that mechanism, usually, that the coordination takes place between an ambassador and the other component elements of his mission, or her mission.

Q During your time in Libya, how often did your country team meetings take place?

A Very often.

Q Once a week? Twice a week?

A It was more than once or twice a week.

Q Was it an everyday meeting?

A Sometimes. I can't say that we did it, you know, we met every day for every week, but we met quite often because we were a new embassy, and there was a lot to do there.

Q Did that country team meeting also include representatives from NSS?

Mr. Evers. Do you know what NSS is, Ambassador?

Mr. Cretz. No, I would just assume. No, I don't know.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Or NSC, National Security Council, did it include a representative from that organization?

A We didn't have a -- we had different component agencies, but not anybody specifically from the NSS at post.

Q Okay. Did you ever report to -- in your time in Libya, did you ever report to anyone from NSS?

A Yes.

Q And who did you report to?

A At the time, Daniel Shapiro, the current ambassador to Tel Aviv was the head of the Middle East reporting -- Middle East office in the NSC.

Q Do you recall how often you reported to Mr. Shapiro?

A As the circumstance required.

Q What types of circumstances would require you to report to Mr. Shapiro?

A Well, for example, if there was a presidential message that I was to deliver, I would keep him as well as State Department abreast of what the process was in terms of that, or if there were visitors from the executive branch from time to time.

Q Were -- did you have any particular reporting requirements that you had to, on a regular basis, provide to Mr. Shapiro or anyone with NSS?

A No. I mean, this was normally -- we did normally State Department reporting, that I'm sure, you know, went to the NSC, and if there was any follow-up or anything, that would usually be conveyed to me through the State Department.

Q And were you tasked -- do you recall whether you were actually tasked by NSS to -- you mentioned that if there was a presidential message that you were to deliver, you would report back. Were there any specific taskings that you recall during your time as the Ambassador to Libya?

A Not that -- I can't recall anyone -- any individual tasking that didn't go through the State Department.

Q Okay. Can you kind of describe, during your time at -- in Libya, can you describe -- I'm going to give you a list of names, and can you describe for me what they did with respect to Libya. Feltman, Jones --

Mr. Evers. Do you want to --

Ms. Jackson. Do them one at a time.

Mr. Evers. One at a time.

Ms. Clarke. Okay. That's fine.

Mr. Cretz. Jeff Feltman was the Assistant Secretary for Middle Eastern Affairs?

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Did you ever report directly to him?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And what about Beth Jones?

A Beth -- I knew Beth Jones in the past, but I didn't have any -- I can't recall any relationship I had with her while I was in Libya.

Q Okay. That's fine. Elizabeth Dibble?

A Yes, Elizabeth Dibble was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under Jeff Feltman, and we had constant interaction on Libya.

Q Okay. Ray Maxwell?

A During my -- during my time in Libya, I had very little. He was -- he became a DAS late -- like I forgot what time, but we had very little contact.

Q Okay. [REDACTED]

A I don't recall direct communication with [REDACTED]. I think most of the communication with [REDACTED] went through my management people because he was involved in management issues.

Q Do you recall what his title was?

A I think he was director of the NEA executive bureau.

Q Okay. And [REDACTED]?

A I think she was the post management officer for a period of time under the management -- I think she was in [REDACTED] office.

Q Office?

A Yeah.

Q Okay. What about [REDACTED]?

A [REDACTED] was also, I think, part of the post management structure.

Q And would you have had direct correspondence with [REDACTED]

██████ or --

A Rarely. She was -- she would normally deal with my management counselor or the DCM.

Q I'm not sure if I'm pronouncing this name correctly, but ████████?

A ████████ she was the desk officer for Libya in the State Department.

Q Okay. And would have had direct --

A Yes.

Q -- contact with her? And what was her role as desk officer, what were some of the --

A She -- she basically, as any desk officer does in the State Department, handles the day-to-day affairs. She's the conduit, or he or she is the conduit between the post and the State Department, in general, and other agencies.

Q Okay. Can you describe for us the reporting structure that you had while you were in Libya, so the people that served under you, how did they report to you, what did you -- was it a -- did they report directly to you about only significant issues within their portfolio, or did you have regular meetings? If you could kind of describe that for us.

A Because we were -- I was the first ambassador back in Libya in 36 years, we were a new institution. So, in effect, I think that our structure may have been a little more tighter than others because of that situation.

So I would normally, at the beginning of my tenure, ask the varying reporting -- the various reporting officers to clear things with me, even of a routine nature. As time went on, and as we became more established as a mission, the main -- the main cables or the main messages that would go out that I would ask to be cleared on would be those that were either sensitive in nature or had some policy content.

Q And you said that as time went on, you kind of moved to this structure. Do you recall about the timeframe when you began the --

A It was probably, as I recall, several months after I -- maybe 3 or 4 months after I had arrived there.

Q Okay. So this may have been within mid- to late 2009?

A Let's see. Yes, uh-huh.

Q And was that -- did that hold true once you returned to Tripoli in the fall of 2011?

A Yes, I think that's fair to say.

Q Okay.

Mr. Evers. Can I just ask. What held true? I'm not sure -- for the sake of the record, I'm not sure that was --

Ms. Clarke. The reporting structure, in that if it was a matter of a routine nature, generally, they did not have to return --

Mr. Cretz. Right, sensitive or --

Ms. Clarke. Something new or sensitive.

Mr. Cretz. Yeah, policy info, yes. That's true. Yeah.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q And while you were serving as ambassador, [REDACTED]

served as the DCM; is that correct?

A She -- well, Chris Stevens served as my first DCM. He was there already, and he served for the first, I think, 7 months that I was there, and then [REDACTED] came after that.

Q How much -- you said Chris Stevens was there already. How long had he been in Libya before you arrived?

A I don't recall the period. It was several months, but I don't recall because there was a -- there was several different charges that there were there. He was the last one.

Q Okay.

Ms. Sawyer. Can I just ask a clarifying question?

Are you talking about the fall of 2011 or 2008?

Mr. Cretz. I'm talking about when I arrived in December of 2008.

Ms. Sawyer. Okay.

Mr. Cretz. And then through the summer of 2009.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Thank you. And so can you kind of describe the role of the DCM for Mr. -- for Ambassador Stevens and then for Ms. [REDACTED] what were their roles? What was kind of some of the issues that were in their portfolio?

A You know, I think the best way to describe it would be the ambassador would be the CEO and the DCM would be the COO of a corporation.

Q Okay.

A And they, I think, in general, for any embassy, the DCM is

the day-to-day issues, management, consular issues, et cetera, personnel issues, and beyond that the -- there's a division of labor, depending on the relationship between an ambassador and DCM. In particular, I had great trust and confidence in both Chris and [REDACTED] so they had a lot of leeway to run the various parts of the mission, and obviously, bring to me the issues that they thought were sensitive or policy-related, or personnel-related that really rose to the level of an ambassador.

Q So as the -- in the role of DCM, were they -- was that position in charge of crisis planning for the embassy?

A At times, but I mean, obviously, the -- in terms of we're talking about a very delicate -- indelicate situations, then certainly I would, you know, kind of oversee that particular -- but in terms of a situation where things were what we would define as normal, when the threat level was not increased or whatever, that the DCM would be the normal individual who would chair, for example, the EAC meetings.

Q So if the threat level was not normal, would you chair the EAC meetings?

A Not every time, but I would usually take that responsibility, yes.

Q And I assume if the DCM was chairing -- well, if the DCM was chairing a meeting, the EAC meeting, would you also attend that meeting or would they usually report to you what was discussed?

A Most of the time they would report to me, but at times, I would attend, but normally, the DCM would chair the same meeting.

Q Would the DCM be involved in kind of the request for security personnel, ensuring that the embassy or any other branches within Libya had the necessary security personnel?

A The DCM would be part of the -- would be part of the important participants who would be, you know, assessing the situation, but that would be -- anything related to security, normally be a mission effort. I mean, we would all -- it wouldn't be solely in the purview of the DCM to decide whether we needed this or we needed that.

Q In -- when you had -- you have an RSO for the embassy, how is that reporting structure? Does the RSO report through the DSM or does the RSO report directly to the ambassador?

A The RSO would normally report directly to the DCM. Obviously, if there was an issue of, you know, of tremendous importance, whatever that needed to be elevated right up, that option was open to them.

Q So if an RSO had a request for additional resources, whether it was individuals or equipment, would that request initially go to the DCM?

A Under normal circumstances, yes.

Q And then what would -- under normal circumstances, what would happen with that request?

A There would be a vetting, there would be an analysis, there would be an estimate, there would be usually an EAC meeting of some kind, or several, and then when the -- when there was a country team, let's say consensus or agreement, then that usually be booting up to

the ambassador or myself to make the final decision before it went to Washington with a proposal.

Q In your role as Ambassador to Libya, did you, in general, did you accept the recommendations of the RSO that came through the DSM?

A Generally speaking, yes, uh-huh.

Q And who was the RSO during your time in Libya?

A I had two. I can't remember the first one's name. The second one was [REDACTED]. He -- I think [REDACTED] came when I returned to Libya in September of 2011.

Q Okay.

A But I can't recall the name of the DCM who was there when I -- under my regular tour from 2008 to 2010.

Q Do you mean you can't recall the name of the RSO?

A Right, I can't recall the name of the RSO.

Q With respect to Libya and prior to the beginning of 2011, kind of the Arab Spring timeframe, who was responsible for the day-to-day decisions such as who traveled to Libya?

A What timeframe are you talking about?

Q Prior to the -- prior to the beginning of 2011.

A Okay. So this is -- I was in Libya up until the end of December of 2010. In terms of who traveled to Libya, if it was -- if it was a routine travel request, usually the DCM would approve or disapprove, depending on the activities of the embassy at the particular time. I mean, if we were very busy with doing something,

we might ask a visitor to postpone.

If we didn't -- if from time to time we didn't think that the visit was appropriate, or we didn't understand the mission, we would ask to delay, but normally, the DCM would approve visits or not. It's a country clearance process, and if it was an important visit or if it was somebody with a sensitive mission, then the ambassador would usually approve or disapprove.

RPTR KERR

EDTR WILTSIE

Q Are there -- can you describe the steps in a normal country clearance process.

A I think the original -- the way it works in Washington, I think, is that the particular visitor will start with the desk. The desk will then send country clearance requests to the embassy. The embassy will vet it. And if there's no issue, the response will be made very quickly.

There were times when, let's say, high-level visitors or mid-level visitors may want to come to a post, but let's say the post is busy with something else or there's some kind of crisis or there's some kind of activity going on that they'd like to postpone.

They would then usually go back to the desk and the Bureau to ask them to intercede to see if the visit could be postponed or delayed for some period. But, in my experience, certainly the vast majority of country clearances have been approved.

Q You mentioned that you left Libya in December of 2010. What precipitated your --

A The publishing of the WikiLeaks material for which my embassy and my name was on every cable. And there was such information that -- regarding the Qadhafi family, Qadhafi himself, that there was such an angry reaction that, after a period of harassment of myself and basically -- and an implicit threat against me, the Secretary decided that I needed to leave.

Q So you returned to Washington, D.C.?

A Yes. I returned to Washington. Yeah.

Q And during your time -- when you returned to Washington, D.C., you were -- what was your role at that time? Were you still the Ambassador of Libya?

A Yes. I was still the Ambassador of the United States to Libya. But, obviously, my position had been compromised seriously. And so I think the decision -- well, I don't think there was any possibility that I could return under that -- under the Qadhafi regime.

They were -- he was livid, angry, and it was very dangerous, I think, for myself and my family. So I started working with the NEA Bureau on Egypt financial assistance issues.

Q And so, once you returned to Washington, D.C., what -- when -- at what time was there a discussion about the possibility that you probably would not be able to return under the Qadhafi regime?

A I think it was assumed. At least, when I left the country, I think it was assumed that there was no way I could return. That was right from the start.

Q Were there discussions that began at some point? Once the Qadhafi regime fell, were there discussions that began regarding your potential return to Libya?

A Well, once the revolution began in February, I was asked to come back and kind of help oversee the Department's reaction to the revolution.

So during the period of late February through August, I was very active in Libya policy. So I still retained my -- I never resigned my position as Ambassador. So I was still Ambassador during that whole period.

Q And so the period between December and February, is that when you were working with NEA regarding Egypt?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Now, we were just talking a little bit about kind of the decisionmakers for who entered and left Libya and you said, under normal circumstances, if it was a routine request, usually the DCM was involved in that decision.

A Uh-huh.

Q Once the -- once the Arab Spring occurred and the Tripoli embassy was evacuated, my understanding is it went into suspended operations. Is that correct?

A Well, when the -- when the embassy was evacuated, in effect, it was reconstituted at Navy Hill. And so we were able to gather most of the staff who had not been assigned to other places and we -- we, in effect, operated what we called the embassy on the Potomac.

Q And as far as the question about who made decisions regarding who could and could not go into country, did that change? Did the decisionmaker change at that point?

A Well, there was no -- there was no travel into the country once the revolution began. Once we were evacuated, the embassy was closed and no one was traveling during that period of time.

Q And, at some point, people did begin to travel back in -- State Department employees did begin to travel back into Libya during 2011. Is that correct?

A In April, Chris Stevens was appointed as the special envoy. And so he went in with a -- I think one or two other officers and a DS contingent to Benghazi.

Q And so would that have -- decision have fallen to you or who would that decision have fallen to?

A The decision to send Chris?

Q Yes.

A No. That was not my decision.

Q Do you know whose decision that was?

A I don't know who specifically made that decision.

Q Was it someone within the State Department?

A I don't know.

Q Okay. You mentioned that, from February to August you -- "resumed" may not be the appropriate word, but you essentially resumed your role as Ambassador --

A Right.

Q -- to Libya and were involved in policy decisions regarding Libya.

Can you describe for us what you were doing during that timeframe.

A During the time, we had an embassy -- as I said, a virtual embassy out of Navy Hill, and they were -- we were working as an embassy from afar.

So we would be, for example, contacting people that we knew on the ground in Libya. We were doing some -- we were doing some analysis of what we knew about the situation.

I myself was also involved in reaching out to as many of the Libyan personalities as possible, taking calls, receiving calls.

I was traveling a bit. So, in effect, I was -- I was acting, to the extent possible, as an Ambassador in exile, for want of a better term.

Q When you were traveling, was that -- were you traveling -- was that part of your official duties or were you traveling a bit for personal --

A No. This is all official duties. Yes.

Q Just for my clarification. Okay.

And so you mentioned that Chris Stevens went back into Libya in April of 2011. Were you involved in that decision?

A I was involved to the extent that, at that time, Jeff Feltman, our Assistant Secretary, said that there is -- there was a desire to send a special envoy to Benghazi, did I -- could I recommend anybody to go.

And my first reaction was to say Chris Stevens would be the perfect individual to do that. That was the extent of my participation in the decision to send Chris to Benghazi.

Q And do you recall when that conversation occurred?

A It was really very -- it was several days before he actually went, but I can't -- whether it was the end of March or early April,

I can't remember.

Q And you said that Jeff Feltman indicated there was a desire to send a special envoy.

Did he indicate to you where that desire came from?

A No, he didn't.

Q Did you have any indication whether that was a desire by the White House to send a special envoy into Libya?

A I did not.

Q And why did you say that Chris Stevens would have -- would be the perfect envoy?

A Well, because Chris -- well, number one, because he had had previous Libya experience, and I just thought that he would -- he was the kind of person who would -- who would really jump at the opportunity for such a historic mission. And he was a good friend as well.

Q Do you recall what -- was he in D.C. at the time?

A Yes, he was.

Q And do you recall what role he was --

A I think he was in the -- one of the -- the Bureau for Nonproliferation, I think, at the time, Deputy Director or Director of an office. I'm not sure of the exact title.

Q And you mentioned that you traveled some during this time period.

A Yes.

Q Where did you travel to?

A There was one -- one trip maybe in early March where I went

to Rome and Cairo, and the purpose of that trip was to meet with Libyans and to get a sense of the nature of the revolution, the nature of the opposition to Qadhafi.

I met with some Libyans in Rome, and then I went to Cairo to meet some of the people from Libya who would actually come across the border to meet with me for me to get a sense and to report back to Washington as to what my view was as to who these people were and was it a legitimate opposition.

Q Did you also travel to Paris to meet with the Secretary and Chris Stevens --

A I'm sorry. To meet?

Q With the Secretary and Chris Stevens during the early part of 2011.

A I travelled a few times with the Secretary during that -- from that March to September period.

Q And was -- did you travel with the Secretary and during that travel have a meeting with Chris Stevens regarding his role as the envoy -- special envoy?

A As I recall, before I did any travel with the Secretary, Chris had undertaken consultations in Washington and then had gone to Paris on his way to Benghazi. And I had traveled with the Secretary and her party to Paris, and that's where I met Chris while he was on the way.

Q Okay. And --

Ms. Jackson. So let me just interject.

At that time, the decision had already been made to send him in to Benghazi as envoy?

Mr. Cretz. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Do you recall if that meeting involved Mr. Jibril in Paris?

Mr. Evers. I'm just going to flag here that this probably gets to the type of topic that we discussed off the record that may be classified.

And I'd just ask the witness to think carefully about that. Obviously, it's your call, but I --

Ms. Jackson. At this point we're just asking about the players and not the content of the meeting.

Mr. Evers. I understand. And we talked about it --

Ms. Jackson. Right. Yeah.

Mr. Evers. -- off the record, and I appreciate your willingness to let me just jump in.

Mr. Cretz. The meeting with Mr. Jibril, the Secretary was present, I was present, Chris Stevens was present.

Ms. Jackson. And I'm just trying to understand the sequence and timing of everything.

Had -- within the State Department, had -- had the decision been made to send Chris Stevens in as the envoy at that time or was this more of a preliminary meeting to assess whether an envoy would go in and whether or not it would be him? I'm just trying to I understand --

Mr. Cretz. Yeah. As I recall, the decision had been made to send

Chris to Benghazi. He had gone ahead of the Secretary's first trip to Paris with myself and her staff to consult with the French and others. And while in Paris, he was waiting for the final logistical details to be worked out as to how he would get to Benghazi and when he would go.

Ms. Jackson. So, then, from the time that he arrived in Paris, Chris Stevens did not return to the United States before he went in in early April into Benghazi?

Mr. Cretz. As I recall, he did not return to the States.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Thank you.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q And you mentioned that you -- during the period between February and August of 2011, you traveled with the -- on several occasions with the Secretary.

A Yes.

Q Were all of those trips related to Libya?

A Yes.

Q And did you travel back to Libya with the Secretary?

A Never during that period.

Q Were -- can you describe -- generally describe what those trips -- where they were to and who was involved in those.

A The trips were to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Abu Dhabi, Istanbul, and Paris, and these were part and parcel of the Secretary's dialogue with the various coalition partners, determining, you know, assessment of Libya's situation and next steps.

Q Did these trips take place in the earlier part of that timeframe, February to August?

A They took place throughout.

Q Throughout?

A Throughout the period. Right.

Q Did you have -- once you finished your trips to these various places, were you -- did you draft up any reports or any notes from the meetings that took place during these trips?

A There were times during the reports where the Secretary would have a meeting and I would act as note-taker.

Q Okay. And, generally, what would you do with those notes?

A They would be sent through the normal State Department channels, through the Secretary's staff, and then distributed as required.

Q Do you know what -- kind of how those notes would generally be titled? Would they be directed to the Secretary or would they be directed to another bureau?

A Normally, it would be the Secretary's memorandum of conversation with so-and-so.

Q Can you describe for us any involvement of the White House or the NSS with the decision to send a special envoy into Libya?

A I do not know anything about that.

Q And what was your understanding of the policy -- the U.S. policy reason for having a presence in Benghazi?

A Well, the -- the center of the revolution was in Benghazi.

It was the place that the opposition, you know, had centered around as its, in effect, capital, quote-unquote.

The other -- several other coalition partners had also established envoys in Benghazi. So it was only natural that we were -- a huge stake in the outcome of Libyan -- of the Libyan revolution would have a presence there as well.

Q What was the U.S.'s -- what was the U.S.'s huge stake in the outcome of the revolution?

A Well, we had intervened, along with our coalition partners, to -- you know, to ensure that there was not a slaughter of the Libyan people.

And Libya was a -- was a critical country in terms of its geostrategic position and our interests as well as others' interests there.

Q And can you describe why Libya was a critical country in terms of its geostrategic position.

A Well, for several years, I mean, we had had -- we had been estranged from Libya, obviously, because of its involvement in terrorism, specifically with Pan Am 103.

And when over a period of years there was a decision by the Qadhafi Government to foreswear terrorism, dismantle its weapons of mass destruction program, and to compensate our Pan Am victims, that was the kind of decisions that we required -- the conditions that we imposed on them in order for us to begin to establish relationship again.

When you take a look at Libya's critical position in North Africa

in terms of its oil wealth, in terms of its strategic position right, you know, basically at the back door of Europe, there were several reasons why Libya constituted an important national interest for the United States.

Q So do you recall what the length of Stevens' initial trip to -- as a special envoy to Benghazi was going to be, how long he was going to be in Benghazi?

A I don't recall that there ever was a limit for how long it would last, you know. There was never -- there was never a time imposed on it either one way or the other.

Q Was there a time imposed to reassess whether or not his presence -- he should continue to be in Benghazi?

A As I recall, some time -- it depended sometimes on the circumstances and the security situation so that we were always -- there was always an assessment of whether, in fact, the situation was appropriate or too dangerous for our presence there.

Q And was that a daily assessment or weekly assessment?

A Yes. As I recall, it was a daily -- a very frequent assessment, because from time to time there would be incidents there.

For example, there was a bomb at the hotel where he was staying -- where he and others were staying or there were some other demonstrations or whatever in Benghazi.

So -- but given the -- you know, the unsettled situation in Benghazi and in Libya, in general, there was -- there was a constant assessment of the viability, I think, of the mission.

Q Were you involved in those assessments?

A I was involved to the extent that I was in contact with Chris quite often during that period while I was in Washington, and he was -- we would discuss the -- you know, the situation and the viability of the continuance of the mission.

Q How often did you have contact with Mr. Stevens during that timeframe, especially when he first went into Benghazi?

A Right. If not every day, several days a week.

Q And how did you have that contact, that communication? Was it email?

A Either phone, email, or cables.

Q Was it type -- was it like a formal reporting that he was providing to you or what prompted these conversations?

A We had established a system where he could do reporting either in the traditional cable/email format or, if he had something that he thought that I might want to report myself, he would do that. So it was a very varied kind of way of reporting based on what he wanted to do.

Q Once the -- Tripoli went into exile, was there like a task force set up -- well, I guess slightly prior to the evacuation of the embassy, was there a task force set up in Main State to deal with the issues regarding the evacuation and --

A I'm sorry.

Q -- and any other issues that may have come out of that?

A I did not deal with Libya from the time I returned to

Washington until the outbreak of the revolution.

Q Okay. And so, when you began -- once you began dealing with Libya after the outbreak of the revolution, were you aware of a task force that was ongoing or had been set up?

A For the evacuation?

Q For the -- for the evacuation -- it's my understanding that it was for the evacuation and that this task force remained for a short time period after the evacuation once the Tripoli in exile was set up.

Were you aware of that?

A I was not involved in any way with the task force specifically related to the evacuation and the aftermath. I was involved with -- once the embassy was set up, then I became involved.

Q Okay. And was -- was there an ongoing task force related to the embassy or was -- once the embassy in exile was set up, did all of the issues that were related to the embassy come back within the embassy in exile program?

A The embassy was specifically -- the embassy in exile was specifically set up to deal with the -- all of the issues related to Libya in the aftermath of the revolution and in the aftermath of the evacuation.

Q When you had these conversations or reportings with Mr. Stevens, did you relay that information further up the chain or what -- what would you do with that information?

A Normally, I would report on the outcome of my discussions with various Libyans on the situation in Libya in general. And if what

Chris told me was reportable, I would include that in my discussions in terms of what I was hearing from various contacts.

Q What do you mean by if what he told you was reportable?

A Well, if it was -- I mean, if it was -- if there was an issue -- if he had met with somebody or he had learned of a particular issue or if he knew something about our -- let's say our counterparts in Benghazi that he thought was noteworthy or something that impacted directly on the situation that needed to be raised to a higher level, he would report that to me or he could report it directly. Like I said, it was a very fungible kind of situation.

Q Were your conversations solely based on kind of like a policy discussion or did you also discuss like the security environment and changes that were happening during the time --

A We discussed the totality of the situation.

Q And were you aware of -- did Mr. Stevens report to anyone else besides yourself?

A I don't know who he might have reported to beyond myself, but he had -- obviously, I think he had the authority to do that.

Q So in your discussions, did he ever say, "Well, I'm going to mention this to so-and-so as well" or --

A Not to my recollection.

Q Who would -- who were the -- you mentioned that -- the bombing at the Tibesti Hotel and there were other incidents that occurred when Mr. Stevens first went back into Benghazi, and we are also talking about a frequent assessment of the security situation and

whether he needed to remain there.

Who were the decisionmakers that would have made the decision to have him leave Benghazi?

A I didn't -- I would basically receive the information about a particular incident or whatever, and then I would pass it on to the NEA front office.

As to the discussions as to whether -- you know, what should be the assessment of the consequences of any particular action, I don't know the specific people who would have been in the room making that decision.

But I think, you know, normally under those circumstances you would have the NEA Bureau, you would have the Department of Security, et cetera, normal departments that are responsible for those kind of issues.

Q Would you have been involved in that discussion? Other than passing the information along about the security incidents, if there was a discussion about whether or not he needed to remain in Benghazi, would you have been included in that discussion?

A I was not included in -- I don't know how many discussions there were or were not, but I was not included in them.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q When you would have conversations with Mr. Stevens, were they generally one on one or were they more of a group call conference call with a variety of players or actors?

A They were one on one.

Q One on one?

A Yes.

Q And his emails back and forth to you assessing the situation and reporting in, were they to you alone or would they be to, say, yourself and Mr. Feltman or anyone routinely other -- anyone else in the State Department?

A As I recall, I mean, I can't -- I can't remember who specifically they were to, but I -- to my -- the best of my recollection, I can't remember who else he would have sent them to, but I'm almost certain that he did send them to others as well that were included on the chain.

I was not his sole interlocutor on the other side. He had some -- he had a fair amount of flexibility to -- you know, to whom he wanted to send his messages, and I certainly did not keep it as proprietary information.

Q And when you would talk to him one on one on the telephone, would you then write up a synopsis of your conversation and send it on to others in the Department such as Mr. Feltman or --

A It was a normal part of my duties that -- you know, that if I made contact with a particular individual and there was some important information to convey, I would convey it to the NEA front office. Yes.

Q And what means would you use to convey that information?

A Usually email format.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q I want to show you an exhibit and give you a few more minutes to read it. We are marking this as Exhibit 1. And I'll go ahead and for the record just read the document number. It's 05395446.

[Cretz Exhibit No. 1

Was marked for identification.]

A All right.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q So --

Mr. Evers. I'm sorry. Just one second, please.

Thanks, Sheria.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q So this is a chain of emails. The top email is dated April 5th, 2011, and you are not on the top two emails, but you are on first one.

A Right.

Q And it appears to be a summary written by [REDACTED]. And during this time -- what was [REDACTED] position during this timeframe?

A During this timeframe, she was acting as a virtual DCM, same as she did while we were in Tripoli.

Q Okay. And it appears to be a summary of several meetings that Chris Stevens and team had. And then, at the very bottom, it talks about DART.

And for the record, can you describe what DART is.

A You know, I think that the DART was -- you know, I don't

remember, actually. An AID --

Q What -- do you recall -- you mentioned earlier that, when Stevens went in to Benghazi, he went with --

A He was accompanied by -- yeah.

Q Do you recall if those individuals were a part of this team?

A There were some members. And I remember that it was DART, but I can't remember the exact bureau that --

Mr. Chipman. The DART acronym means the Disaster Assistance Response Team.

Mr. Cretz. Oh. It's a USAID, I think, component.

Mr. Chipman. I'm not sure, Ambassador, but I think that's what the DART acronym stands for.

Mr. Cretz. Right.

I think it was -- I'm not sure about this, but it was a group that was accompanying him to do a -- I believe a survey of the humanitarian needs.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Okay.

A I think that's what it is. But -- right.

Q Okay. And it talks about the team wanting to extend for an additional 3 days. And the last sentence says, "I believe DART's extension would require M approval."

Were you involved -- were you -- would you have been involved in that approval as well or would that have solely been something that was done by M?

A I don't recall being involved in that particular decision.

Q Okay. Would you have been made aware of that decision or asked to concur in that decision?

Mr. Evers. If you remember.

Mr. Cretz. I'm sorry?

Mr. Evers. If you remember.

A I don't remember if I was asked or if I -- I mean, it didn't appear to me that I needed to be involved in that particular decision.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Do you recall why that would have been a decision made by -- or an approval that was required to be made by M?

A I would assume that, because it involves interagency funding and resources, et cetera, that the Under Secretary would have been involved.

Q So I'm going to show you another exhibit. We'll mark it Exhibit 2. And for the record it's document number 05396329.

[Cretz Exhibit No. 2

Was marked for identification.]

A Yes.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q So this is an email chain. It's dated April 10th, 2011, and its subject is "Update from Special Envoy Stevens." And it discusses a situation in Ajdabiyah -- is that how you --

A "Ajdabiyah." Yes.

Q Ajdabiyah.

-- and that they are considering departure.

Do you -- your name is not -- as far as I can tell, you are not actually on this email. I know there are a few groups of individuals. It looks like there are some group emails under the "To" line and the "cc" line.

And correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't know if you would actually be a part of those emails as well -- email groups.

A I don't recall if I was a part of those. But I specifically recall that Ms. [REDACTED] did call me on that Sunday because I remember exactly where I was when she read this situation --

Q Okay.

A -- to me. So, after that, I believe I was in contact with Jeff Feltman, et cetera, on that.

Q And can you describe what Ms. [REDACTED] relayed to you.

A Basically, information in this, that there was -- that Chris was concerned that the situation was getting a little bit too dicey and that they were considering evacuating the mission.

Q And when you made a -- when you had a conversation with Mr. Feltman, did you provide your views on whether or not Mr. Stevens needed to evacuate?

A I don't recall what I exactly said to Mr. Feltman. But I think, in the end, the decision was give it a little bit more time and, if the situation did not improve, then to follow, I think, Chris' recommendation.

Q So would Mr. Stevens have been the one to make the decision

to depart the country or who, ultimately, would say, "Yes. We need to follow his recommendation"?

A I don't think that Chris would have been the one to make the decision. It would have been certainly made in Washington.

Q And do you know, was that a decision that would have been made in the NEA Bureau or with M or --

A I don't know where the decision -- had the decision been made to pull out, I don't know who would have made that decision. Because, in the event, the mission continued.

Q And they did -- the team did not actually pull out. Do you know who made the decision to stay? What precipitated the decision to stay? Did the situation in Ajdabiyah improve or was there a conscious decision to stay?

A I don't remember what the -- what the final circumstances that fed into the decision to stay were, whether the situation in Ajdabiyah had improved or whether Chris felt that the situation had stabilized to the point that they didn't need to evacuate.

Q So I see I have about 2 minutes left of my time. I think this is a good time to stop and take a break.

We'll go off the record, and we'll consult with the minority. So if you all want to take your hour. Would you like to take a short break?

Mr. Evers. If counsel would.

Ms. Clarke. So we can resume in about 10 minutes.

[Recess.]

RPTR DEAN

EDTR SECKMAN

EXAMINATION

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q It is 11:25. Ambassador Cretz. Again, I am Heather Sawyer. I am with the Democratic members of the committee. I am joined here today by two of my colleagues Peter Kenny and Kendal Robinson. Just on the record, I want to just reflect that this is Kendal's last interview with the committee and last full week. She has been with us for a little over a year, a detailee from GAO. She has been a wonderful addition to our team, we will miss her. And I want to make sure an official record reflected that. So we appreciate her service, we also appreciate your service and your willingness to appear before the committee voluntarily and spend some time answering our questions.

The resolution authorizing this committee sets forth jurisdiction for the committee in nine different categories related to the attacks in Benghazi that occurred in September of 2012. As the focus of this investigation has shifted considerably in the year that we have been stood up, Democratic members have objected to the expanded scope. Part of that objection -- we have objected to a number of different areas. One of those areas is the expansion back to decisions that were made.

I think we started today talking a little bit about things that happened maybe as far back at 2008, 2009, carrying forward into the

spring of 2011. We have objected because, in part, Congress was fully aware and briefed on those issues at the time and also in part because the Democratic members do not believe that those decisions bear any relation to what happened, what the state of affairs was in Libya in the runup to the attacks and decisions that were being made then.

Nonetheless, you have been asked a number of questions this morning about -- in fact, the first hour was exclusively devoted to the time period of the spring of 2011. So I am going to ask you some followup questions on that and move us forward a little bit in time.

Turning your attention to the time that you had returned to -- I think you called it the embassy on the Potomac?

A Yes.

Q So I think as of February 2011, when personnel from Embassy Tripoli were reconstituted here in D.C.?

A Yes.

Q During that time period, I think you touched on the fact that you and your colleagues were seeking, to the extent you could, to reach out to I presume existing contacts in Libya to try to obtain as much information as possible as to what was still going on in the country. Was that the case that?

A That was the case, yes.

Q And what kind of information were you getting from your contacts on the ground?

A Well, it ranged from a dire humanitarian situation. I spoke to several people involved with the military who were asking for

specific equipment. We were -- you know, it was anything related to what was happening in the country, atrocities by Qadhafi troops. We were talking to people of the Transitional Council, the putative government, and they were trying to get across to me what their message to the world was supposed to be, how they were going to observe, for example, human rights and everything else and that, in the post-Qadhafi era, that there would be a functioning and democratic government. So the information was across the wide spectrum that you would expect during a fairly chaotic and very violent civil war.

Q And then you and your colleagues would pass that information throughout the Department to relevant policymakers --

A Yes.

Q -- to help inform U.S. policy going forward?

A Yes.

Q And the effort there was to have kind of continual engagement to the extent you could, gathering of information, keep our decisionmaking up to date and allow it to evolve?

A Yes.

Q You had also indicated in the last hour that you engaged in some travel and you explained that it sounds like the primary purpose for that travel was similar to what you were doing even when you were here, which was try to engage with people who some of them directly involved in the revolution, is that the case?

A Well, the first trip that I mentioned to Rome and Cairo was specifically to gauge the bona fides of the opposition, that was the

main goal and to find out who the main players were.

In the subsequent trips with the Secretary, it was basically to be a part of her team and also to serve as a liaison with the Libyans whenever they showed up to these different meetings.

Q And remind me that initial meeting that you said you had to kind of get a sense of the bona fide --

A Right.

Q -- roughly what was the timeframe that that took place?

A That must have been -- you know, maybe -- oh, I can't remember. I can't remember whether it was late March or early -- I can't recall the exact date.

Q And what was your impression when you met with the individuals you met with who were part of -- and I assume these were folks who were part of the Transitional National Council, but let me know if that is incorrect. What was your impression?

A In the lead up to the revolution and to the discussions as to whether we should intervene, there was a lot of suspicion about who the opposition were, that, in fact, this was just a radical Islamist push attempt to take over the country. So when I met with them, I don't recall the specific names of the gentlemen I met with. Some, as I recall in Cairo, were members of the TNC; some were not. But my sense after talking to them was, no, this was a genuine revolution. This was a genuine opposition. This was a real opposition to Qadhafi, that it was secular in nature, but that it contained Islamist elements because Islamist elements were part of the Libyan fabric, even before

the revolution. So my recommendation -- or when I got back -- was to say that this is a legitimate revolution and that we should support it.

Q And you said your recommendation when you got back, but you shared that with your colleagues here in Washington?

A Yes.

Q And would that have included then Secretary of State?

A Well, it would have started at Jeff Feltman, and my assumption was he passed that forward to the Secretary because it was the issue of the day in terms of Libya at that point.

Q And you actually traveled to meet with these people. So you got the chance to meet with them kind of face to face in person?

A Yes.

Q How valuable was that, your ability for yourself to judge whether or not this was a credible opposition that they had the requisite bona fides?

A It was absolutely critical. I mean, there is nothing that replaces four eyes talking to each other directly. You can talk on the phone. You can read material, but at least, certainly in my diplomatic career of 34 years, I found that nothing replaces that one-to-one interaction.

Q That is not necessarily a phenomenon unique to you, you would assume the same would be true, for example, the Secretary of State, isn't that the case?

A Absolutely.

Q So if she were to want to meet and then to later meet with some of these same individuals, that face-to-face, in-person contact would probably be invaluable to her as well?

A Yes.

Q And, again, your goal, both in that initial meeting and in the meetings that you had throughout the spring was to gather information, pass that information along and allow the U.S. Government's decisionmaking to be as informed as possible?

A Right.

Q And to evolve, as necessary, as information you were gathering changed?

A Yes.

Q So if, at some point in time, you had made it determination that the assessment as to the bona fides of these individuals was not as solid as you had thought, you would have felt free to pass that information that actually would have been valuable information?

A Yes.

Q And I assume you didn't ever make that recommendation, but please inform us --

A No, I did not. I never made the recommendation that this was not a bona fide group that we should support.

Q And with regard to -- you mentioned kind of, along with our allies, we had intervened in the revolution. I assume -- and I just want to clarify -- that by that you are talking about the support that the United States gave to -- the United Nations resolutions that were,

in particular, United Nations Resolution 1973, which did impose a no-fly zone. It also authorized member states to take necessary means -- all necessary measures to protect civilian populations?

A Yes.

Q And so the United States was not standing alone in that?

A No.

Q And you had supported our decision to join in the United Nations' effort?

A Yes.

Q Now, you also had said in the last hour that when Mr. Feltman had come to you and indicated that there was a desire to have an envoy in Benghazi, you recommended Chris Stevens. You said you weren't a part of that decision, but when he came to you, did you think it was a good idea to the extent possible to have an envoy in Benghazi during the revolution?

A Well, what I knew at the time was, as I mentioned, that our other European colleagues were going in and that, in fact, if we really wanted to know what the situation was on the ground, we had to have somebody in Benghazi because at that point we were blind. So I supported the decision, absolutely.

Q So you had at one point referred to the embassy on the Potomac also as a virtual embassy, I think those were your exact words.

A Uh-huh.

Q So even though we had a virtual embassy here, there was still value to being on the ground in Benghazi during the revolution?

A Absolutely. For the same reason I talked about one-to-one diplomacy. And also Libya was in a state of civil war. It was chaotic. Even before the revolution, knowing what reality was or what is ground truth was difficult to come by. So we had to have people on the ground to make sure that we understood the situation, what the needs were, and what was the best way forward.

Q And, in fact, I just wanted to direct your attention to exhibit 1 from the last hour. And I will just have you take a look. I just want to direct your attention to the thread that begins at the bottom of the page, which is the message from [REDACTED] that goes out -- it starts at the bottom?

A Oh, yes, uh-huh.

Q It continues over on to the back side of that page and you are one of the recipients, along with Mr. Feltman, who you had indicated was someone that you had also conveyed information to.

A Uh-huh.

Q And that first instance of that email says, quote, "Chris Stevens and team just finished a successful first day of meetings," end quote. It goes on, I will just direct your attention to the second paragraph, the second sentence, quote: "The TNC provided its vision for the future, which matched the messages Amb Cretz has received as well as the, quote, 'the vision statement' delivered by Mahmoud Jibril to S. The TNC was very concerned about misperceptions in the foreign press regarding alleged links between TNC and Al Qaeda. TNC leadership affirmed that it is totally opposed to terrorism and extremism and said

that the number of extremists in eastern Libya is very small. Those extremists do not represent the goals or views of Libya's revolutionaries."

Is this the kind of when we were talking about the value of having someone there who can report out, can confirm impressions that people like yourself might have had, is that the kind of contact and reporting that you are talking about?

A Absolutely.

Q It then goes on, in the fourth paragraph, it just begins with, quote, "Security environment appears to be permissive," end quote. And then, in the next paragraph, the second to last sentence says, quote, "Assuming the security environment remains permissive, Chris thinks this is a good idea it, as would allow the team" -- and at this point, we are talking about the DART team who would like to remain -- "to gain a more thorough understanding of the humanitarian situation," end quote.

So there it would indicate just on its face that the belief was that at least the security environment was safe enough to remain in Benghazi for the present time. Would that seem accurate?

A Yes.

Q And that in line with what you were saying, there was a continual assessment as to whether or not the environment was permissive enough. Whether or not -- our team should stay or our team should leave. Is that accurate?

A It was done on a continuing basis, yes.

Q And then just directing your attention to exhibit 2 that you had discussed with my colleagues briefly in the last hour. I am directing your attention to the second email there, again it is from I think your deputy chief of mission [REDACTED].

A Uh-huh.

Q And it indicates there: "FYI," for your information, "situation in Ajdabiya worsening; Chris weighing whether to pull team. We asked you to consult Euros and then give Department a recommendation," end quote.

Do you recall whether Mr. Stevens ever did I circle back and give a recommendation?

A As I recall, the situation stabilized and that there was not a recommendation to pull.

Q So it is your recollection that Mr. Stevens did not ask to be removed from Benghazi at that time?

A That is my recollection, uh-huh.

Q So, with regard to questions you were asked about a decision to stay ultimately being made in Washington, in this particular instance, there hasn't been a recommendation to the best of your recollection that then had to be either approved or questioned back in Washington?

A To the best of my recollection, that is true.

Q Now, during this period of time up until when you returned and Tripoli reopened, I think in September of 2011 --

A Yes.

Q -- were you traveling some, but you were also present in D.C. during that time?

A Yes.

Q And just as a general matter, you know, I indicated when I opened that part of our Democratic members' objection to the expansion of the scope of jurisdiction was the fact that Congress -- the standing committees of jurisdiction at the time were being fully briefed about what was going on in Libya, about information that was being garnered, including information from the Special Envoy. You know, without belaboring the specifics, were you one of the people helping to brief Congress? Did you brief Congress during that time period?

A Yes.

Q Did you ever refuse to provide information when asked by Congress about U.S. policymaking in Libya? And I am talking again the period of time from February 2011 to September of 2011 or even any time while you were in Libya?

A I never refused requests.

Q So, as I was mentioning, you know, it is our understanding that Embassy Tripoli reopened or the reopening began in September of 2011. Were you one of the people who did return then to Tripoli at that time?

A Yes. Prior to my return, my deputy [REDACTED] lead a security team, plus some others to reestablish our presence. I think she went in maybe two weeks before I did, and then I think I went in around September 19th or something like that, mid-September.

Q So you said that Ms. [REDACTED] lead a security team. So at the time, there was a concern about ensuring that in returning to Tripoli, U.S. personnel would be safe there?

A Yes.

Q And the recommendation coming back from Ms. [REDACTED] what -- in terms of the security and the ability to come back -- do you recall in general what the report back was?

A There were extensive discussions regarding the return prior to the date that she left. And the decision somehow an interagency decisionmaking process occurred whereby there would be DS agents, there would be MSU mobile -- MS -- I forgot the --

Q MSD?

A MSD. And that there would also be a military component coming from Stuttgart from our troops there.

Q So --

A And the AID as well.

Q So as best you remember and understand it, the team went in. They made a recommendation. There was an interagency discussion and then a determination as to what the appropriate security component would be to allow you all to return safely?

A They -- I think the decision was already made before she went in about the package that was needed. She went in, and I am not sure whether there was an adjustment either up or down after she went in, but I know that there was a very appropriate level of security, certainly when I returned in mid-September.

Q So it is your belief and sense that security concerns were being weighed appropriately, considerably given enough attention --

A Absolutely.

Q -- at the time you were going back in?

A Yes.

Q So this was the first time, I assume -- maybe you had been back in Libya -- but the first time you had been back in Libya since you left in December of 2010?

A Yes, first time.

Q And at the time you had left, Colonel Qadhafi was still in control of the country?

A Yes.

Q So this was for first opportunity to be in Libya since the fall of Qadhafi?

A Right, he was still alive at the time.

Q What was your sense, if you could just give us and share with us that experience, what it was like to be in Libya for the first time after Qadhafi was no longer in power?

A Well, it was exhilarating, because these people had been under oppression for 31 -- 40-something, 40-some odd years. There was an element of just relief and happiness and joy. At the same time, there was also a very, very chaotic and very dangerous situation on the streets because it was still a civil war raging. It was not really finished until the end of October after Qadhafi was finally murdered. But it was -- as I said, it was both exhilarating and also a bit

terrifying because it was a post -- or it was a civil war still raging at that time.

Q And I am sure we will talk about this throughout the day, but given that, given your sense, and what you have conveyed to us that it was both exhilarating and a little terrifying. From your perspective, you have had a career in diplomatic service, why was it important to be there if it felt terrifying at the same time as exhilarating?

A Well, because we had participated in an event in which we helped liberate a people who had been under a horrible, horrible tyrannical leader and system for all those years. And that we -- America was welcomed back. We had been part of the Libyan history, you know, starting even at the end of World War II, when we had an Air Force Base at Wheelus, so we had a good relationship with Libya. And the Libyan people understood what we stood for, democracy, our values, et cetera. So it was exhilarating to the extent that here we were in a position help a people who had been so oppressed to actually regain a real sense of pride and freedom and nationhood.

Q From documents that I have reviewed, it appears that you were in Benghazi shortly after you returned to Libya in early October, at least for a few days. Do you recall that trip at all?

A Yes.

Q And do you recall generally what you did while you were there, what opportunities you had to meet?

A I met with the various TNC representatives who were still

in Benghazi because they had not moved to Tripoli yet. I met with some civil society groups. I met with some individuals. Just to get a sense of an assessment of what the situation was like there.

Q And what was your sense -- Special Envoy Stevens was still in Benghazi at the time?

A Yes.

Q I don't know if he was there while you were present.

A No, actually, he was on leave I think when I went.

Q But was still --

A Yes, he was there until November. I don't remember the date.

Q And what was your sense of how the team, he and his team, had done in terms of establishing relationships, having connections and contacts in Benghazi?

A Well, he was a master diplomat. He did everything that any diplomat in that situation could have done. The main message that I came away from my 2 or 3 days in Benghazi was that the move had already been afoot that the government would move back to Tripoli. And there was real concern on the part of the people in Benghazi that we, especially the Americans, retain some kind of presence there because they wanted us there, and they knew how important our presence would be there once the government moved back to Tripoli. That was the main message, other than, "Thank you, America, for what you have done."

Q And given that Embassy Tripoli was now reopening, did you have an opinion on whether, to the extent the United States could, we

should stay in Benghazi even with Embassy Tripoli reopening at that time?

A During the Qadhafi regime, Benghazi was always seen by Qadhafi as a threat to his regime because this is where the Senussi family, who had ruled Libya for a while, had come from, the eastern part of the country. And, therefore, Benghazi was treated as a hotbed of protest, and several times during the Qadhafi regime, he had undertaken cruel actions against what he termed dissent in Benghazi. And it was really -- there with a lot of problems there because they had been denied an ability to share in the oil wealth in the country.

So my view was that it was important, as I had heard, that the people in Benghazi did not want to be forgotten again. They were very, very much afraid that once the government moved to Tripoli, it would revert back to a situation, not as terrifying as it was before, but that they would be the stepchild in the country. And they strongly believed, and I firmly supported their view, that the presence of the United States in Benghazi in some form or manner would help be an advocate for them when it came time to negotiate whatever the arrangement would be -- the final government arrangement would be after the fall of Qadhafi or after the revolution.

Q And in addition to that, with regard to just reporting for the U.S. and for purposes of the U.S. and having some presence in the eastern part of Libya as well as Tripoli, the capital, what was your sense of kind of the value of that reporting just for policymakers in Washington and the U.S. Government?

A Well, Benghazi was also a commercial center so it was important from that particular aspect. There was also an area of concern, especially centered in the city of Derna, which was a city that had been a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism and extremism, even during the Qadhafi years. So there was a concern on our part or at least that I advocated why we would need a presence there; it would be not only to ensure the people of Benghazi felt that they had an advocate to make sure that they were not isolated from the country again, but it was also to maintain at least some kind of outpost to make sure we could watch that burgeoning jihadist growth, starting in Derna but also in other parts of the country.

Q And do you recall whether Ambassador -- then Special Envoy Stevens shared your views on the value of continuing the presence in Benghazi?

A Oh, absolutely. We had several discussions just to talk about this, and we had both agreed that we definitely needed some kind of presence there.

Ms. Sawyer. And I am going to just because it is been a few years, I am going to mark for identification purposes as deposition exhibit 3.

[Cretz Exhibit No. 3

Was marked for identification.]

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q And I am just going to read for the record the document number at the bottom of this is 5409887. It is just a 1-page document.

Up at the top, it is an email from -- the top of the chain has an email from John C. Stevens to [REDACTED]. It bears the date November 1, 2011. Subject line is, Forward: Mission Benghazi Future. I want to give you a moment to read that, so take your time.

A Okay.

Q So I wanted to direct your attention to what is the first email in that chain, so it is just two emails down from that. And that is an email from Stevens, John C., sent on Monday, October 21, to [REDACTED], Gene A. Cretz, [REDACTED]. We have already talked about [REDACTED] as your deputy chief of mission at the time. Gene A. Cretz is obviously you. And then who is [REDACTED]?

A He was the director of the Maghreb Affairs in the State Department in the Office of Maghreb Affairs.

Q The subject line there is "Mission Benghazi Future." The first line says, quote: "Here are a couple of possible models for Mission Benghazi. I have discussed with Benghazi RSO PM/MANPADS rep and USAID/OTI rep here," end quote. There is then some information about current staffing, and the options are down below.

A Uh-huh.

Q What is captured in A says, quote, "Slimmed down compound: Principal officer (FS-02 level) MGT/IRM and possibly one USAID OTI officer (if they get requested funding). Four DS. One admin LES plus guard force."

Could you just explain first what your understanding? My

assumption is when it says "DS" there that that is for diplomatic security. Does that seem accurate?

A Yes.

Q And then one admin LES, is that a locally employed staff?

A Yes.

Q Plus guard force. And my assumption in reading this was that was locally employed guard force?

A Yes.

Q So that is accurate?

A There was the possibility of, as I recall, of some companies were coming in that might have been able to provide expat security. But I don't know whether that ever came to fruition. So guard force is meant I think for the most part to mean LES but could mean potential expats from security companies.

Q So not Diplomatic Security's guard force?

A No.

Q The Diplomatic Security in that force?

A No, uh-huh.

Q Do you recall what at that point in time -- so it slimmed down, presumably shrinking the footprint, do recall what the current diplomatic security staffing had been at that time?

A I don't recall that.

Oh, I am sorry, it would be five DS. You can see in the mission -- in the first paragraph. Chris said it was himself, [REDACTED] OTI, plus five DS.

Q Thank you. It is right there, and I hadn't seen it, so I appreciate that.

A Right.

Q And do you recall whether or not there was a specific discussion of that level of DS staffing at four at that point in time?

A I don't recall.

Q Now option B says, quote, "Virtual i[^] presence and all three compound leases, zero full-time State Department staff, used hotels (as Spanish, Greek, and foreign NGOs had been doing). Possibly leave FAV in Benghazi at [REDACTED] to support TDY travel in eastern Libya." So my understanding of that was that, in essence, the U.S. would lead Benghazi as a physical matter entirely and operate solely out of Tripoli. Is that accurate?

A Right, that was that option. And we were trying to explore the various options that we had and what would be the most appropriate and what would be in terms of being able to be resourced as well.

Q So certainly the notion that the U.S. could leave Benghazi entirely and have no physical presence there on an ongoing basis and operate solely out of Tripoli was something that was discussed and on the table as a possible option?

A Yes.

Q The email goes on to say, Mr. Stevens says, quote, "My personal recommendation would be option A. There will be a lot of political activity in Benghazi in the coming year, not least of which will be elections and campaigning. A good number of TNC members

coming, including the chairman himself, will be traveling frequently between Tripoli and Benghazi. MANPADS collection and USAID programming will also continue in the east. It would help us a lot to maintain a small platform in Benghazi during through next fall," end quote.

The very next email up the chain from Ms. [REDACTED] opens with, quote, "Option A looks right to me," end quote. So, at this point in time, it appears from this email that Mr. Stevens has made two recommendations. He has weighed in on option A, which is the slimmed down compound as opposed to a virtual presence, meaning no physical presence, and your deputy chief of mission, Ms. [REDACTED], has agreed with that. Do you recall whether you agreed with it and what your opinion was?

A I did because I had been talking to Chris about this, and this was basically the option that I would have formally adopted. I was actually I think on leave that day when this came in. But we had already discussed this. And my sense was -- or my view was the same as Chris', that option A was, given all existing circumstances, would be the best that we could do and that we should do.

Q So you all -- I mean, this is the Ambassador in country at the time, the deputy chief of mission, and Special Envoy having a discussion. I assume you felt it was a robust discussion about a continued presence in Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q And this is happening at the end of October certainly or

early November 2011 based on this, is that accurate?

A Yes.

Q So, at this point in time, you are having a robust discussion on the ground. Had you been told at this point in time by anyone in Washington that the decision already had been made that the presence in Benghazi would continue?

A No. My understanding was that there was a continuing discussion both among our staff in Tripoli and with Washington. It was a continuing dialogue as to what would be the best option in terms of the presence or nonpresence in Benghazi.

Q And you felt that whatever recommendation came out of you all, that the team in Libya would be taken seriously and considered by other colleagues within the Department --

A Yes.

Q -- in making a decision?

A Yes.

Q You didn't feel that this was just a futile exercise because the decision had already been made?

A Not at all.

Q Now just to finish with this exhibit, the deputy chief of mission, Ms. [REDACTED] goes on to talk a little bit of DS staffing in her paragraph. My understanding of reading that was that it appeared that there was some consideration, at least in Tripoli, about the possibility of altering security compliments for off-compound moves, but that that was under consideration at the time. Is that --

A Right, we were -- we were looking to find -- given the situation, the security situation, in Tripoli, and given the resources that we had, what was the best way to match the resources at hand with the work that we had to do. It couldn't just be a business as usual, which would require a DS agent and an armored car for every officer going out to report. We didn't have that many resources.

Q And this effort to, I think as you put it, match resources with the work you had to do, was that just something you all did on an ongoing basis?

A All the time, it was a necessity.

Q And stepping aside from your time in Libya and this period of time in Benghazi, over your career in the Diplomatic Corps and the time you have been posted overseas, is that an ongoing dialogue in consideration to try to match the resources that you have with the work that you need to do?

A In every mission that I have been in, that has been the case.

Q And that is a serious consideration and concern for certainly you, in this instance as the chief diplomat in the country, and others within the State Department?

A Any chief of mission worth their salt takes security as the number one element, safety of our personnel, and that is true in every mission that I have been in.

Q Do you recall this email went as well to Mr. [REDACTED] Was he involved in these discussions? Do you recall talking with him about it and what his opinion was?

A He was -- well, obviously, I mean, he was important because he was our link to the rest of the Department on these day-to-day issues. I think that during the time that Chris took some leave, [REDACTED] actually came out for a few days to act in Chris' place so we had someone there. And it is my recollection that in discussions we had, that he was fully in agreement that we needed to retain a presence. I can't tell you for sure that he bought on to this option A and its comprehensiveness. But I do know that he supported the notion that we had to have a presence in Benghazi, and he saw it firsthand because he had been out there on a visit.

Q So it is our understanding that within about a month of this period of time that we have just been talking about with regard to this email, that a draft recommendation memo was underway, that there was the start of a drafting of a potential action memo about the continued presence in Benghazi that was being put together for the Under Secretary of Management, Patrick Kennedy.

Ms. Sawyer. Do you recall -- I have that action memo here, so I am going to actually share that with you and mark it as exhibit 4 for identification purposes.

[Cretz Exhibit No. 4

Was marked for identification.]

Ms. Sawyer. We can go off the record, and I can give you a couple of minutes to review that, and I just have a few questions for you. Off the record.

[Discussion off the record.]

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Have you -- let me first read, for identification purposes, exhibit 4 bears the Document No. 5261557. It is a 3-page document.

Do you recall seeing this memo before? Had you seen this memo?

A No, I did not.

Q So this memo goes from any -- it says, from up there, "NEA -- Jeffrey Feltman," and we spoke about Mr. Feltman a little bit in the first hour. What is your understanding, to the extent you have one, of kind of why Mr. Feltman would be sending this? And it says at the top of that, "Action memo for Under Secretary Kennedy-M." Before you answer that question if you could just explain for us who the Under Secretary -- the role of the Under Secretary Kennedy would have been? What role Under Secretary Kennedy would have had in helping make this decision or actually it looks like in the approval line, approving this decision, this recommendation?

A Well, Jeff Feltman, obviously, is the assistant secretary for the Middle East Bureau, Near East Bureau, would be the appropriate official at this level to deal with this particular issue.

Under Secretary Kennedy's domain as Under Secretary for Management includes the DS Bureau. So he would be the natural decisionmaker in terms of this kind of proposal.

Q So just directing your attention to the second page of this memo, the top of the second paragraph, again there is going from Mr. Feltman the head of the NEA, Near East Bureau to Mr. Kennedy. It says, quote, "Although our presence in Benghazi has shrunk considerably

since the reopening of the Embassy in Tripoli, I would like to maintain a small State-run presence in Benghazi through the end of calendar year 2012, to include the critical summer elections period."

A Uh-huh.

Q That sentence, even though you hadn't seen it, seems to be in line with the recommendation that you and the deputy chief of mission, [REDACTED] and the Special Envoy, Mr. Stevens, had made. So seeing that now, was that consistent with the recommendation that came up from you all on the ground in Libya?

A Yes.

Q And then further down on that same page, that next paragraph does build out some of the reasons why a continued presence in Benghazi will be useful and is being recommended.

A Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Q Do you agree with those reasons there? Do you have any to add?

Mr. Evers. This is the bottom paragraph?

Ms. Sawyer. I am sorry, the bottom paragraph that starts "a continued presence in Benghazi will emphasize U.S. interest in the eastern part of Libya," and it goes on to explain a number of reasons?

Mr. Cretz. I am sorry.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Did you agree with those reasons?

A Well, these were the exact arguments that I was making as chief of mission back to Washington as to why we should maintain a

presence.

Q And about halfway down that, a little further than halfway, there is a sentence -- and this resonates with what you were telling us just moments ago -- that starts, quote: "The team will be able to monitor political trends (Islamists, tribes, political parties, militias) and public sentiment regarding the, quote, 'new Libya' as well as a report on the critical period leading up to and through Libya's first post-Qadhafi elections. Programmatic benefits to a continued U.S. presence in Benghazi include building on USAID/OTI's programs to strengthen civil society groups, media training, and capacity building in municipal councils." So those were all reasons that you thought it was valuable for the United States to remain in Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q And with particular regard to the upcoming elections, why did you feel it was important for us to have a presence in Benghazi in particular during that period of time?

A These were going to be the first elections that were held in Libya in over 40 years. The Libyans had no experience with elections. They were in the process of really making an effort to form a new democratic system. So I think it was critical that we be there to make sure that the normal problems that plagued a country in this particular stage of evolution were minimized to the extent possible. I think with our presence, perhaps, if we were able to help them a bit and just to help guide them through the process was critical as we saw it for the future of this democratic experiment.

Q And given some of the dynamics that you have explained to us about Benghazi in the east and Tripoli as the capital, what significance, if any, did that dynamic play, given the upcoming elections, in having a continued U.S. presence in Benghazi?

A Well, I think it just helped bolster the confidence of the people that we would be there, that whatever suspicions they may have had toward whatever government emerged in Tripoli would have been allayed to a certain extent by knowing that the U.S. was watching. So it was a critical notion on our part that we be there through the elections to make sure that they were conducted in the most democratic means possible.

Q Earlier on that page, at the end of the second paragraph, there is a statement that says, quote: "With the full compliment of five special agents, our permanent presence would include eight U.S. direct-hire employees, two slots for TDY PM and USAID officers, and one LES program assistant."

To the extent there is a recommendation there about the security posture staffing of five special agents, what is your understanding, if any, of who would have been responsible for making that assessment and making that recommendation to go up to Under Secretary Kennedy?

A Who would have been responsible for that proposal?

Q That particular aspect of it.

A I think it would have been a DS call, because this was -- they were the experts in terms of the kind of security that was appropriate to any particular situation. I think this kind

of -- certainly the post -- Foreign Service officers outside of DS would have had some input into it, but the yeoman work in terms of making that recommendation would have fallen appropriately to DS itself.

Q And then I just wanted to ask you about the very last sentence on page 3 of the body of the memo. There it is talking about NEA proposes to terminate a lease on one building and retain leases on Villas B and C through the end of calendar 2012, quote, "or until such time an appropriate alternate property can be found that would allow for co-location of all U.S. Government personnel in Benghazi," end quote.

So to the best of your recollection in considering maintaining or continuing a U.S. presence in Benghazi, was the notion or option of potentially co-locating U.S. Government personnel in the city one that was an ongoing potential option or consideration?

A I can't speak to that discussion in Benghazi. I mean, in Tripoli, we obviously had that same kind of discussion as to the benefits or the need for co-location, but I don't know the -- I don't recall the discussions with respect to co-location in Benghazi specifically.

Q And in addition to it potentially being considered, the context here made me assume it was being considered as something that would be more of a permanent situation where you would physically co-locate on a more permanent basis. But was it also something that was a potential or considered as an option on a temporary basis if either the State Department or other U.S. Government entities needed to

co-locate temporarily for security reasons or others, was that an option --

A I think that was an option, yes. But, again, I can't recall the specifics or any particular discussions that I participated in. But co-location was an issue and -- I just don't remember any details as to the proposals or anything.

Q And this recommendation was in fact approved. Is that your understanding?

A Yes, that is my understanding.

Q Was it your understanding that it was approved by Under Secretary Kennedy?

A My assumption is that if it went to him as an action memo and that his signature is on it, that he approved it.

Q Do you recall whether you discussed with Under Secretary Kennedy the continued presence of the United States in Benghazi --

A I don't recall.

Q -- around this time?

A I don't recall the specific discussion I had with him.

But as you can see from the body of the text, especially on page 2, on the paragraph beginning with "the continued presence in Benghazi," those are all the arguments that I had put forward. I assumed from this that my -- I didn't need to see him face to face -- the discussions and the recommendations that I had been making by phone, et cetera, had been accepted.

Q I think instead of getting into a new topic area we will

go ahead and conclude. I think we are almost up on our hour. So we will go ahead and go off the record.

[Recess.]

RPTR BINGHAM

EDTR WILTSIE

Ms. Clarke. We can go back on the record.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q When we left off the last hour, our colleagues had been discussing the action memo that went to M regarding extending the Benghazi facility and the facility being open until the end of 2012.

A Uh-huh. Yes.

Q I just wanted to take a step back and just ask you -- you said that you had visited Benghazi and, of course, you spent a lot of time in Tripoli.

A Uh-huh.

Q And if you could kind of compare and contrast the security situations between those two cities.

Mr. Evers. Do you mean in terms of the two posts or the two cities generally, their security situation?

Ms. Clarke. Kind of an overview.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q And then, in terms of the two posts, what were the resources that were available to the posts regarding security?

A What timeframe?

Q Once you returned to Tripoli. So the fall of 2011.

A Yeah.

Q And we were discussing the action memo to Kennedy. So

around that timeframe.

A Yeah.

Q The fall of 2011 beginning part of 2012.

A Yeah. I mean, in general, Tripoli was still in the throes -- in September of 2011 was still in the throes of civil war. Tripoli had fell -- had fallen. But there were still active pockets of resistance throughout the country from Qadhafi loyalists.

The country had also begun to break down in anticipation of a victory over Qadhafi into the militias that, in fact, were fighting Qadhafi. The war against Qadhafi was not by a unified opposition army.

It was made up of a militia. The jihadists had a militia. The people from Zintan had a militia. The people from Misrata had a militia. So in anticipation of the final victory, they were, in effect, fighting it out.

In a sense, a lot of what we see today in Libya, they were fighting it out for a foothold to make sure that they got a piece of the pie -- a piece of the power pie once things settled down.

So the situation in Tripoli was very unsettled. There was lots of gunfire both celebratory, because it was their way of -- bullets were always flying all over the place -- as well as aggressive firing, militia upon militia. So we were -- I think the situation in Tripoli was very, very unsettled.

I did not get the same sense in Benghazi. I think I visited Benghazi twice when I went back in September. And, I mean, it was clear that the situation was still unsettled.

And, as I recall, at that particular point, I did not get the same sense of a country still in the throes of a civil -- of a, you know, a civil war.

It was much more restrained, if I can use that term, because I think this was the -- you know, this was -- as I mentioned in the beginning, this was the headquarters. This was the centerpiece of the revolution.

So, in effect, they were -- you know, they were so glad to have gotten rid of Qadhafi that they were still in very much a celebratory mood. But there were -- I mean, there were, you know, incipient attempts by different groups to, for example, charge fees at barriers and things like that.

So my sense in September of -- when I went back was that -- in fact, that Tripoli was in a bit of a more difficult position than Benghazi.

Q You stated that you went to Benghazi twice. Did both of those --

A I think it was twice. Yeah. I can't remember. I know I went once with Susan Rice when she came to visit. I think that was in November -- oh.

But I also went in October. As soon as I got back, maybe 3 weeks after I went by myself, obviously, and then by -- in November, I believe, when Susan Rice came.

Q At some point -- so you have described Tripoli versus the sense in Benghazi during that timeframe, kind of the fall of 2011 -- how

would you compare the two during the spring of 2012?

A Tripoli was still unsettled, and we were beginning to see increased levels of violence in Benghazi. There was an attack against the British Ambassador. There was an attack against the U.N. rep.

It was difficult to say at that particular time whether -- especially the U.N. rep -- whether that attack was intentional.

Because there was also, as I recall, a big wedding celebration going on in that area and there was gunfire and things. So it was possible, but that particular attack, although I don't have -- I can't give you a definitive statement.

But the one against the British Ambassador certainly was worrying because it was really among the first attacks that we might be able to label as attacks against Western interests.

So while Tripoli still remained chaotic, Benghazi appeared to be moving in a different direction than it had been before.

Q And when you returned to D.C. in 2012, was that the May 2012 timeframe?

A Yes. I think it was toward the end of May 2012.

Q And would you characterize the two security situations in Tripoli and Benghazi as how you just described or was there even more trending in Benghazi towards more incidents?

A Up until -- in neither place, up until that particular timeframe, I can't recall any security incident that was targeted against either the United States specifically or against Western

interests writ large.

Q And you said up until that particular timeframe. You are referring --

A Yeah. Up until those events in Benghazi in the spring of 2012. So it was a disturbing trend because, in Tripoli, we did not -- I did not see a piece of intelligence. I did not see any indication that the violence that was taking place was other than the product of the rival militias or whatever fighting it out for their piece of the pie.

We never had any intelligence report, as I recollect, that specifically targeted U.S. or Western interests in Tripoli. Benghazi began to look like there was something going on there that was disturbing.

Q Do you recall if you ever had any intelligence reports about Benghazi that there was going to be specific targets of U.S. interests or Western interests?

A I don't remember any.

Q Can you describe some of the assets that were available in Tripoli, some of the security personnel that you had available in Tripoli.

A We had our normal DS contingent, which was, I think, two or three. Then we had MS -- mobile -- is that right? -- MSD units that came in. I forgot how many there were. But I think at one time we had five or six.

The numbers elude me at this particular point. Plus, we had a contingent of SST out of, I think, Stuttgart, and they were about 15

to 20. But don't hold me to the numbers because I just can't remember.

Q It was a long time ago.

A In Benghazi, as I recall, we were at -- I can't remember whether it was three or four DS agents. So it was supplemented from time to time by Tripoli in case they had a visitor or in case something -- you know.

Q So if there were a visitor to Benghazi, Tripoli would send some resources down for the purpose of that visit?

A Yeah. I can't give you a specific instance where that happened, but I know that that was a -- that was a request that from time to time was made. But I just can't remember a specific instance where it was. But those assets from time to time were made available in case it was needed.

Q So -- but the SST and MSD, there were not any of those assets in Benghazi. Correct?

A To my knowledge, there were neither of them there. Yeah.

Q And you mentioned that, generally, Benghazi was around three to four DS agents.

A I think that was the number. I just can't remember.

Q Do you recall any discussions about difficulties in staffing the number of DS agents that were intended to go to Benghazi?

A As I recall, the agreement was that we would try to keep the DS contingent in Benghazi at the level of five. I do not know whether we ever reached that level. I just can't recall whether, in fact, that was -- that had come to fruition.

What I do know is that the various officers that were there felt that they from time to time didn't -- that the mission was not necessarily well staffed enough for them to be able to go out and do their reporting on a regular and aggressive basis.

Q So some of the -- are the officers you are referring to the principal officers?

A Yeah. The acting -- yeah. The principal officer. Yeah.

Q So they would report to you on occasion that, "Because of the number of DS agents that are currently here, we are unable to go out and obtain -- do the type of reporting that we are in Benghazi to do"?

A I recall discussions with one or two of them at various times that said that, because of the requirement to protect the facility, that it was difficult for them to go out because it required a certain level of accompaniment around the city. But, again, I can't -- I can't remember whether, in fact, we ever reached the level of five.

Q So, to your recollection, it hovered between three and four most of the time?

A I think that is to the best of my recollection.

Q And do you recall the numbers ever dropping below three?

A I don't remember.

Q So you mentioned having the SST assets available to you in Tripoli. At one point, were they -- were there SST assets available to you during your time until you departed in May of 2012?

A Yes.

Q And were there discussions about -- at the beginning of 2012 were you involved in discussions about extending the SSTs?

A Yes.

Q And what was your opinion about whether or not SST needed to be extended?

A Well, my view was -- and I expressed this to General Ham and others, who was the head of AFRICOM at the time -- was that -- my belief was that we needed them, especially in Tripoli, because of the ongoing strife and, also, because the elections were going to be held in June.

And I think our general sense was that this was going to be a time -- a real problematic time period because it was the first election and for some of the reasons I went over before: first election, a lot at stake.

So I felt that, in order -- again, for us to be able to do the job that we needed to do to get out and to reassure people that we were there to -- in case we were going to bring in observers or something with the elections, that an SST component would be very, very important for us to maintain up until that time.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q If I could, what does the SST bring to an embassy that you don't get with DS agents or local guard force or, you know, bodyguards within country?

A As I recall, first, there was a medical component. We had a Navy doctor for a period of time. They brought special skills. For

example, we had a bomb that was -- a 10,000-pound bomb that was in the middle of the Benghazi compound where Qadhafi used to live and kids were playing on it every day.

And I worked with our -- one of our SST people, and they had a bomb-defusing expert. So we were able to work out a plan whereby we defused that bomb. So that kind of skill, the normal kind of skill I think that most DS agents wouldn't possess, counter -- maybe counterterrorism skills.

I can't describe the level above which our -- because our DS agents were very, very capable. But these guys just brought kind of a special force kind of set of skills to the game.

Q Now, you just mentioned that there was a 10,000-pound bomb in Benghazi. Was that in the Tripoli?

A No. No. I'm sorry. Not in Benghazi. It was in Bab al-Azizia. Sorry about that.

Q I just wanted to clarify.

A I just have Benghazi on my mind.

Q We have been focused on Tripoli and Benghazi.

A Sorry. Right.

So that was the kind of -- they brought a wider range of skills that you would normally get from a DS team, although DS teams do have those kind of expertise from time to time.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q And did DS support your view that the SST team should be extended?

A I am not sure that support would be the best -- that is maybe a little bit strong.

Q How would you describe their view?

A Here is what I would say, that speaking specifically about Tripoli, there was no threat -- there was no direct threat, as I said, to Americans or to Western interests. We were in a dangerous situation, but it was a dangerous situation that was dangerous for everybody.

And so, if you are either on the SST side from the command in Stuttgart or you are in Washington and DS and you are saying, "We have scarce resources. We only have a certain amount of teams of each kind that are available for particular situations," if you are weighing a situation where there is a direct threat to Americans, such as existed in Afghanistan or Iraq, or you're looking at a situation, again, for the deployment of scarce resources in a situation like Tripoli, that -- you know, where there is no direct threat, but there still is danger, as there is in lots of places around the world, where -- are our resources best deployed in a place like Tripoli as opposed to, for example, in Afghanistan or Iraq.

So I think there was a very healthy debate going on. There may have been some people in DS who supported the extension of the SST and the MSD teams, and there were people who did not.

Q And you mentioned in your conversation with General Ham that you wanted the SST team to be extended.

Did he -- what was his view on extending SST?

A Oh, he agreed to do it.

Q During the last hour, we had a little bit of discussion about the return to Tripoli and Ambassador Stevens was still in his role as the envoy until about mid-November, 2011.

A Right.

Q And we also talked previously about kind of the reporting structure that he used when he was an envoy when he first went into Benghazi.

Can you describe for us whether or not that reporting structure that Ambassador Stevens used changed at all once Tripoli reopened?

A I think we began to establish more of an embassy, quote-unquote, consulate relationship because we were in Tripoli and he didn't have that option before, you know, to coordinate on reporting and things like that.

But it was not hard and steadfast. I mean, I deferred to him. If he felt that he wanted to report directly something to Washington, that -- he had that option because he obviously was experienced. We had a good personal relationship. So we had a good, close relationship.

And, as you can tell from the dialogue on what should be the future presence of the U.S. in Benghazi, we were -- when we needed to talk, we talked. For example, I was very involved in evacuating the Libyan war-wounded in the October, November timeframe.

And there were times when in that chaotic situation trying to get approvals from the various officials that needed to be -- to sign off

on it was like herding cats. It was just terrible.

So we would -- you know, for example, if I knew that an official was in Benghazi, I would talk to Chris, and he would go and contact that official and see -- either get in touch with me or get a signature on a piece of paper.

So we -- it became -- it was not a subservient relationship. It was not ambassador and consul general. It was more a question of equals because we both had a healthy respect and affection for each other.

Q Once Ambassador Stevens departed Benghazi and I believe he was replaced by a series of principal officers, did that -- did the relationship between Benghazi and Tripoli change then? Were they considered more or less constituent posts at that point?

A ~~I think the officers were given a lot of leeway to do the~~ kind of reporting that they wanted. We would obviously coordinate on certain things, but I didn't insist that all their reporting come through us. They had a certain amount of leeway.

Their -- I think their management -- I'm not sure about this, but I think the messages on -- that might relate to security in management went -- were handled by Washington.

Q So you think that -- and Benghazi sent -- typically sent security messages directly to Washington?

A I am just trying to recall. I can't say specifically. What I seem to remember is that there was a direct link to Washington on certain issues, which I think security and management may have been part of, but, obviously, with the -- with the participation of our RSO

as well.

Q And do you know why -- is that typical, for a constituent post to communicate directly with Washington about security matters?

A Well, we have independent consul generals. For example, Jerusalem is an independent one. So it is not unheard of. But, again, I am -- I seem to remember that there were -- there was some direct reporting.

I know it was on management issues. And I think it was on security as well. But, obviously, our RSO, you know, was involved with that as well.

Q And the RSO at the time was [REDACTED]. Correct?

A Yes.

Q Were you involved in any requests or made aware of or had discussions about requests that Benghazi may have had for security resources?

A Yes.

Q And do you recall what -- were those requests typically related to personnel or do you recall if those requests also included upgrades to the villas or any items such as that?

A It was more related to the ability of the principal officers there to get around and get out of the compound to do their job.

Q And do you recall whether those requests came through the RSO, [REDACTED] to D.C. or how did those requests typically -- how were those requests typically handled?

A Well, sometimes -- I mean, I knew [REDACTED] who was

one of our principal officers. And I think he communicated to me either by phone or -- I don't remember how -- but that he felt that they needed some kind of flexibility in terms of the presence, either added security or some kind of relaxation of what he interpreted to be, as I remember, strict rules regarding who could and could not be off the compound and with what kind of accompaniment or not.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q And, if I could, just what type -- what did you do in response to his concerns? Did you direct your DCM or RSO [REDACTED] to take any actions to make any inquiries to --

A Yeah.

Q -- lodge a complaint?

A As I recall, I asked [REDACTED] to dialogue with his counterparts in Benghazi to see if we could reach some kind of solution or some kind of compromise.

Q Did you reach out in any way to the NEA front office, to Assistant Secretary Feltman or others, saying, "We are having a problem getting our people out and about to do the type of reporting that you want because we are having problems being fully staffed on the security side"?

A I think I may have, but I can't recall definitively.

Q And did you concur with the assessment of the DS agents that they needed more robust numbers in order to provide adequate protection?

A To be honest, I didn't have as full an appreciation of the

situation that required that. And so I wasn't really able to say, well, that's a good policy or a bad policy.

At that particular point, I think it was their judgment. I may have felt perhaps it was a bit stringent, but, then again, they were on the ground and I wasn't.

Q Did you have any conversations with [REDACTED] as to whether he concurred with the agents' assessments who were -- the agents who were on the ground in Benghazi?

A I don't recall.

Q Did you typically find [REDACTED] to be sensible in his approach to security?

A Yeah. I thought -- you know, he came in with me in September. That was the first time I had met him. And we had to work a lot of issues during that 9-month period that I was in Tripoli.

For example, the airlines were beginning to come back into Tripoli, and we had been flying charter in and out. And we had to spend a lot of time determining whether, in fact, the security procedures at the airport would allow our staff or whether we could make the judgment and a recommendation to Washington that our staff should -- was now able to fly Lufthansa or Alitalia or whatever.

And I found him to be sensible. Yeah. He conducted the right amount of drills. He was -- seemed to me cool and collected whenever we faced a particular problem. He seemed flexible in trying to accommodate the needs of the mission to report, et cetera.

Q So you valued his opinion?

A I did. Yes. I did.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q I think we are going to shift gears a little bit. I just have a series of small topics that I would like to discuss with you. The first topic is: Were you -- do you know who is?

A Yes.

Q And who was he or is he?

A He was a one of -- I believe he was one of our foreign service locals in Benghazi. And he is the one who reported on the downing of the American pilot in -- over Benghazi.

And he called the -- he actually called the incident into the operations center and was able to guide and give information about that particular pilot.

He later -- I don't recall if at that time he was a local in our embassy, but he later became part of the consulate team there and became kind of a local Libyan who was kind of an interlocutor and, also, gave us political and economic reporting out of there.

Q When you said like he actually called into the ops center to report the downing, is that the ops center in D.C.?

A As I recall, I think he is the one who actually called into Washington, which leads me to believe that maybe he actually was an employee of the consulate at the time.

I just can't remember whether it was formal or informal or what. But he did -- he was the one who actually made the call to say, "Hey,

we have an American pilot and" -- you know.

Q And have you ever met him -- actually met him face to face?

A Yes. When I went to Benghazi, and I think he came to Tripoli a few times. He was a very valuable interlocutor for us.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q When was the last time you would have had any contact with him?

A It may have been in February, March, April of 2012. I can't recall the last time I saw him.

Q Do you recall, did he come to Tripoli for your farewell?

A I don't think so. I don't recall him being there.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q You mentioned that you departed Tripoli in May -- late May of 2015.

A 2012.

Q I'm sorry. 2012.

Had Ambassador Stevens already arrived prior to your departure?

A No. I came back -- again, I don't remember the date, but I came back in May. But we met up maybe about a week or a few days after I got back. We met at Shelly's Bar. We had a drink. We had a cigar. I wished him well and everything. And I think he went shortly thereafter.

Q And once Ambassador Stevens left Benghazi in November of 2011, did he return at any point prior to becoming the Ambassador to Libya?

A No. I don't recall that he did.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q During the time from when he left in November of 2011 until he returned as Ambassador, did he remain the envoy?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

A I don't know if he did. I don't know whether he retained that title or not.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Do you know what he was doing in that interim period?

A As a matter of fact, I don't.

Q So you were not having conversations with him on a regular basis about keeping them apprised of what was going on in Libya or talking to him about when you were seeing, prepping him for what he was going to face as ambassador?

A Well, from time to time, we would talk because obviously his, the date of -- I mean how his process was moving forward was of concern to me because I was looking forward to getting out at some point. So we would talk but or exchange emails but it was not necessarily on the situation in Libya, although from time to time we would discuss it. But the bulk of the communications I think that we had was how is your confirmation process going, have you submitted your papers, when are you going to have your hearing that kind of discussion.

Q When did you first know that he was going to be nominated or was under consideration to be the ambassador to Libya?

A I can't recall.

Q Was it before you went back in in September?

A No. Definitely not. Definitely not.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Do you recall -- can you kind of describe for us the -- when the conversation about Stevens becoming the Ambassador to Libya began and who you had that conversation with and how that transition began and took place.

A Well, I didn't have any role in obviously selecting -- or his name being -- he was a natural. There was no doubt about it.

But I don't know the process and the discussion that took place as to who put his name forward or when that happened. I know it was in the -- maybe the late November, December timeframe when it began to gel a bit. But I had no role in -- you know, not for -- not for envoy. For ambassador.

Q Yes.

A Yeah. I had no role in that.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q When you went back in in September of 2011, what was your long-term plan? What kind of discussions had you had with Jeff Feltman or others within the Department regarding how long you were going to be in Tripoli?

A It was very -- it was an amorphous discussion. I said, "Look, I'm willing to go back, but my wife is not very happy about being separated. So I will go as long as I can or as long as is possible, but I would hope that you would come up with a new nominee in a reasonable

time."

I thought in my own mind the January, February time period would have been appropriate. But when it was clear that that was not going to happen, it was fine. And I stayed until May.

Q Was there any discussion that you recall of having Chris Stevens go in as sort of -- as the head, even though he was -- before he was confirmed as Ambassador?

A As I recall, it was a possibility to perhaps have him go in at some point as chargee, but it never went anywhere.

Q Do you know that was?

A I think it was just a decision -- and, again, I -- only that, "Let's make a clean break, one ambassador and another, rather than ambassador, chargee, ambassador."

Because I was there. There was no reason to send in a chargee. I wasn't complaining. I wasn't asking to be sent home. So we might as well let the process play out.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q So, again, shifting topics now, I want to ask you do you know who David Grange is?

Ms. Sawyer. Can we go off the record just for a second?

Ms. Clarke. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. I see no reason to go off the record.

Ms. Sawyer. Okay. I am going to object, then, at this point. I'm not sure that there is any reason to be asking this witness about that but I will let you guys have a little latitude.

Ms. Jackson. This is our hour, and we will continue with our questioning.

A I don't know David Grange.

Mr. Evers. Are we still on the record?

Ms. Clarke. Yes.

Mr. Evers. The answer is he doesn't know who David Grange is.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q Are you familiar with the company Osprey Global Solutions?

A Os --

Q Osprey, O-s-p-r-e-y.

A I don't recall that name.

Q So I am going to show you an exhibit, and I believe it is going to be Exhibit 5.

[Cretz Exhibit No. 5

Was marked for identification.]

A Yeah --

Mr. Evers. Why don't you let her introduce the exhibit and ask questions about it.

Mr. Cretz. I'm sorry.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q For the record, this is a letter dated January 4, 2012. It is from David L. Grange to Andrew Shapiro.

Do you know who Mr. Shapiro is?

A Yes.

Q And who is he?

A He was the Assistant Secretary for political and military affairs.

Q And the letter discusses -- it's from Osprey Global Solutions and it's talking about interests that Osprey Global Solutions has in Libya. And at the very bottom, the very last paragraph, it talks about -- it says: We very much look forward to presenting Ambassador Cretz our credentials and a capabilities brief and invite him to contact myself and/or our Executive Vice President, Richard Vanderveer, at any time.

Do you recall having any discussion with David Grange or Richard Vanderveer or anyone representing Osprey Global Solutions?

A Honestly, I do not.

Q Do you recall having any discussions with a company that had these types of services that they were willing to provide to Libya?

A There were -- throughout the period of -- you know, from October through January, February, when the -- especially when the question of the war-wounded and air evacuation was occurring, I had several discussions.

There were several, as I recall, proposals from different companies that wanted to establish, you know, floating hospitals and -- or to construct hospitals in Libya.

But he may have been one of them. But I don't recall a discussion with him or with his company.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q So you did have discussions with U.S.-based companies who

were offering to provide humanitarian aid in Libya?

A Yes. From time to time, they would come to the embassy and see what the potential prospects were for building hospitals or, you know, helping building infrastructure in Libya or helping with the evacuation of war-wounded or rehabilitation, you know, therapy -- physical therapy, et cetera.

Q And would these companies that provided this humanitarian aid -- would they do so expecting some sort of remuneration or compensation from the Libyan Government for the providing of those services?

A I would assume. Yes.

Q Okay. And for U.S.-based companies, was it, in your opinion, important to -- for you to be aware of that, that they want -- that U.S.-based companies wanted to do that?

A My understanding -- well, at least from the experience that I had, yes. It would have been important for me to know about it because there would have been an angle involved with the Government of Libya at some point, and I'm sure I would have had to have been involved.

Q And do you recall -- during this time period, did you talk with Andrew Shapiro about any of these companies that were interested in providing humanitarian aid in Libya?

Ms. Sawyer. Can I ask which companies are you talking about? Are you talking about the companies represented on this?

A Just Osprey? Are there specific companies?

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Ambassador Cretz, you said that you talked with one or more companies, but you don't recall specifically what -- who those companies were.

A Right.

Q Of those companies that you talked with during this timeframe --

A Yes.

Q -- did you have any conversations with Andrew Shapiro or anyone else at Main State regarding those companies?

A Not to my recollection. I know that Andrew Shapiro visited Libya once, but I don't recall any discussion -- specific discussion with him related to any company or any proposal for humanitarian aid.

Q And in his position as Assistant Secretary for political and military affairs, would he have had a role to play in that?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

A I don't know.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q And I am just trying to --

A Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Q -- understand the State Department structure --

A Yeah.

Q -- and who does what.

When I hear the term "humanitarian aid," I think of USAID. I don't necessarily picture in my mind political military affairs.

A Right.

Q But maybe I just don't understand State Department bureaucracy.

A Yeah. I would have said infrastructure development, not humanitarian development, because this is really more infrastructure than humanitarian. So I misspoke on that particular word.

Q Okay. And would Andrew Shapiro and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs have a role to play, if you know, in the infrastructure for humanitarian aid?

Mr. Evers. If you know.

A I don't know.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Do you know who would in the State Department?

A I would guess -- I mean, if I'm dealing with American commercial interests either in Ghana or Libya or Egypt or anywhere else, my main discussions would take place with the, you know, Economic and Business Bureau back in the States or the Under Secretary of Economic Affairs or the Department of Commerce.

Q Okay. Okay. Thank you. That is very helpful to us.

Ms. Sawyer. Can I ask a question?

There wasn't any document number on this, and we have never received this particular document from anyone other than in the context of an interview.

Just to make clear, how did the committee obtain this document? It has never been provided to the minority other than in the context of it being shown to a witness in an interview.

Ms. Jackson. Actually, I don't know. It is among the documents that we have available to us, but I don't personally know the answer to that. So we'll move on with the next question.

Ms. Sawyer. Well, will you get back to us and let us know where this document did come from and how the committee obtained it?

Ms. Jackson. We'll discuss that after the interview is over. Let's not waste the Ambassador's time with that discussion. We'll take that up a later time.

Ms. Sawyer. Well, just so that the record accurately reflects that we do object to having a witness shown documents in an interview of the Select Committee on Benghazi that has not, to the best of our knowledge, been turned over to the committee in any official capacity and that have not prior to the interview been shared with the minority. So I want that on the record, and we can take it up later.

Ms. Jackson. Well, I think that we should clear up the record, then, that the minority has had possession of this because you just stated previously that this was used in another interview. And so you have seen it before.

Ms. Sawyer. Yes. Thank you.

And in that interview, again, we had not been given the document before. And we have never been told how the committee has come by this document.

So the fact that I didn't object then does not waive my ability to object now and to object to it going forward until and unless I can inform my members, who are participating in this investigation to the

best of their ability, exactly where documents that the committee is getting and using come from if they are not documents that we already know to be in the public domain.

Ms. Clarke. Thank you.

[Cretz Exhibit Nos. 6 and 7
were marked for identification.]

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q I have an additional series of questions for you regarding another topic, kind of switching gears again. And I am just going to put before you two documents and then you can review them.

A Uh-huh.

Q We can go off the record for a few minutes.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Clarke. We can go back on the record.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q So, Ambassador Cretz, I have provided to you two documents. One document that was marked as Exhibit 6 ends in the numbers 5181, and then Exhibit 7 ends in 5144.

These two emails are emails that are sent to you and Jeffrey Feltman from Jake Sullivan. And, for the record, who is Jake Sullivan?

A Jake Sullivan was one of the staff members to Secretary Clinton.

Q Both of these emails appear to be intel-related-type information that he sent to you and Mr. Feltman and asked for your input or your views on them.

Do you recall these emails?

A Yes.

Q And at the time you received these emails, did you know where this information was coming from?

A Know in what sense?

Q Did you know where he -- other than -- Mr. Sullivan was providing you information. But did you know where he had received that information?

A No, I didn't.

Q And the first -- Exhibit 7 is dated January 24, 2012.

Do you recall prior to that day if Mr. Sullivan had sent any other types of intel-type information to you and requested your input on that information?

Mr. Evers. If you remember.

A Yeah. I don't remember whether this was the first or there were previous ones.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q I have two examples. Do you recall if this was a ongoing dialogue that you had with Mr. Sullivan where he would send intel information to you and ask for your view or was this sporadic? What do you recall about this type of --

A It was sporadic.

Q Exhibit 7 is titled "Libya Info." The subject is Libya information. And it says, "Interested, as always, in your views."

And then it goes on to describe information that was obtained from

a source with access to the Libyan National Transitional Council and then your response.

You respond to it. The fourth sentence down in your response begins with, "So the source of this report."

A Uh-huh.

Q "So the source of this report attributing the whole thing to war-wounded does not jive, although they may have been the ones who carried out the violence acts."

Based on that sentence, it seems like you disagree or are not 100 percent in agreement with the information that was provided in this report. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q And what was your thought about this information that Mr. Sullivan was providing to you?

Mr. Evers. Do you mean as a general matter or this specific report?

Ms. Clarke. This specific report.

Mr. Evers. If you remember.

A There were some parts of the information that seemed to reflect reality, and there were other parts of the information that didn't seem to reflect reality.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q And did you ever any follow-up discussion with Mr. Sullivan about this report?

A Not to my knowledge.

Q What about Mr. Feltman? Do you recall having a discussion --

A No.

Q -- with him?

A No. Usually, you know, here was the report, what's my reaction, here's my reaction. And that was usually the end of the matter.

Q And then Exhibit 6 is dated April 5, 2012. This one is -- the subject is "Latest from HRC's contact." On the second page, Jake Sullivan sends it to you, Ambassador Stevens, and Jeff Feltman and says, "Below is the latest report from HRC's contact; would be interested in your reactions."

At that point in time, did you know who he was referring to when he said "from HRC's contact"?

A No.

Q And HRC, did you understand what that --

A Yes.

Q -- meant -- what those letters meant?

A Yes.

Q And that stood for Secretary Clinton?

A Yes.

Q Did you have any further discussion with him about the source of this information?

A I never queried him about the source.

Q Did you have a discussion with Ambassador Stevens or

Mr. Feltman about the source of this information?

A I think we may have had a discussion. I can't recall whether -- "Do you know who this is? Where could this be coming from?" But, beyond that, we never pursued it.

Q And did any of the three of you have an idea at that time who this information was coming from?

A No.

Q Do you know who Sidney Blumenthal is?

A Yes.

Q And have you had an opportunity to meet Mr. Blumenthal?

A No. I never met him.

Q Do you know who Tyler Drumheller is?

A Only from the news.

Q So you have never had --

A No.

Q -- an opportunity to meet him?

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q At the time you were receiving these reports, did you have any idea or understanding that this was information being provided to Secretary Clinton from Sidney Blumenthal?

A No.

Q And how is it that you know Mr. Blumenthal?

A Only from the news, you know. I mean, during the campaign, I -- well, I knew that -- just from the news that he was a former adviser to the Clintons or something.

Q But at the time that you were in Libya, you had no idea that he --

A No idea whatsoever.

Q -- was providing information?

In your other posts or positions in the State Department, had you ever had information like this provided to you via the Secretary, through someone, through a Jake Sullivan, a policy adviser?

A No.

Q Have you had it since? After this -- after receiving these sporadic reports during the time you were in Libya, had you ever received any similar-type report?

A Are you asking me specifically that -- have I received reports that say the Secretary has asked me to -- your opinion on this that he or she received from a source?

Q Yes.

A No. I have never.

Q To your knowledge, have any of your colleagues, other ambassadors, ever received this type --

A I can't address that. I don't know.

Q No conversations with them --

A No.

Q -- or anything like that? Okay.

BY MS. CLARKE:

Q I have just a few more questions for you, very short questions that are, I believe, unclassified, and then I have maybe one

or two questions that are classified.

We are getting close to my time. So I will proceed with the short ones. And then we can turn it over to you all and then have a classified session.

Just prior to your leaving Tripoli in May of 2012 when you were returning to Washington, were you aware of discussions regarding the Secretary planning a trip to Libya in the fall?

A No.

Q And shifting focus to the night of -- or to September 11, were you involved or aware -- did you have any role or awareness of what was happening in Egypt, the Cairo protests?

A Yes. Through the news.

Q So that wasn't something that -- well, I don't know if we have discussed this.

Once you returned to Washington in May, what role did you have at that time?

A I had none. I was preparing for my next ambassadorship in Ghana.

Q Were you at the State Department, where you had an office at the State Department and conducting work there or was it kind of a --

A It was basically a period of consultations for my next post.

Q Okay. And what was your understanding of the nature of the attacks in Cairo and what caused those attacks?

A Just what I got from the news, that there was a contentious

video. I mean, I didn't have all the facts. Obviously, I was not privy to it. Just what I heard in the news.

Q And when our facilities in Benghazi were attacked, were you involved in any of the coordination or the aftereffects of the attack as far as figuring out what happened in Benghazi or were you called in to help out with -- during -- once that -- once the ops report came out that there was something happening in Benghazi, were you contacted about that?

A I was contacted that evening.

Q And who contacted you?

A As I recall, it was our Deputy Assistant Secretary, Liz Dibble.

Q And was this a contact to make you aware? Was she seeking some information from you?

A She had asked -- she said that there was an incident in Benghazi, they were trying to locate Ambassador Stevens, were there some contacts that I could refer to them that they could call to see if they could get information about the situation.

Q And were you able to provide contacts?

A Well, I mentioned right away [REDACTED], and I don't think I mentioned anybody else.

Q And did she ask you to personally reach out to anyone?

A No.

Q At any point after that discussion with Ms. Dibble, were you contacted by anyone from the State Department about what happened

in the State Department's information that was -- that it was providing about the source and the cause of the attack?

A No. The only -- I was called the next morning -- I went to sleep -- I didn't know what was going on, and I went to sleep. I was awakened about 6 o'clock by a CBS reporter asking me if I had heard the news. And that was the first that I knew that Chris had died.

Q And then, lastly, my last line of questions for the unclassified portion is: Can you describe -- were you contacted by the ARB to provide documents during its review?

A Not documents. No.

Q You were contacted for an interview?

A Yes.

Q Did you provide documents to the ARB?

A No.

Q And when you -- can you describe your interview. Were you the sole interviewee or were there other individuals present --

A I was in Ghana. So it was done by DVC.

Q Okay.

A And so I was the only interviewee from Accra, and then the members of the board were on the screen.

Q Shortly after the attacks and still some time before the ARB being convened, a congressional committee made requests for documents pertaining to Benghazi.

Were you contacted or made aware about that request?

A I left -- I was sworn in on September 11, ironically, and

I left for Accra a week later. And certainly, when I left, I didn't have access to any of the documents.

But I assume that, based on all the documents that you have access to and that appear in the papers, that my documents were available on whatever servers still existed.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q The Accountability Review Board that was convened following Benghazi leveled criticism at the State Department for not heeding the requests of the Ambassador, Ambassador Stevens, and as well as when you were there, heeding requests for additional security or being reluctant to provide security in Libya for the protection of State Department staff.

Are you familiar with that finding of the ARB?

Ms. Sawyer. Sharon, I am actually not familiar with that particular finding. I am familiar with findings that there was a shared lack of appreciation, but -- and I'm -- can we just go off the record for a second?

Ms. Jackson. Uh-huh. I will rephrase it.

[Discussion off the record.]

Ms. Jackson. Let's go back on the record.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Ambassador Cretz, are you familiar with the ARB report that was issued?

A I am familiar with the report.

Q Have you read the classified as well as the unclassified

version of the report?

A No.

Q So you have read the unclassified version?

A A long time ago. Yeah.

Q What is your recollection of any criticisms that the ARB made regarding the security posture in Libya and specifically with regard to Benghazi?

A I can't -- I don't have a recollection of what they were.

Q Do you recall that the ARB was critical of not having adequate security staff in Benghazi?

A No. I am not aware of that particular assertion.

Q Are you aware that the report recounts that Ambassador Stevens had made requests for additional security both in Tripoli and Benghazi in the weeks and months leading up to the attack?

A No, I am not.

Q Was it your -- let me just take a step back.

Was it your assessment at the time that you were the Ambassador that you had to repeatedly request, if not demand, security resources for Tripoli and Benghazi?

A Well, as I mentioned before, there was a spirited debate among the various components, each of whom had a different perception of how we should deploy resources, given the particular situation in Libya.

My strong position was to advocate for at least a status quo which, in fact, is the way it turned out. We were able to keep the SST team.

I had forgot what date they left. But that was approved. And we suffered no incidents in Libya.

So while there was a spirited debate, I advocated for more or status quo. Some advocated for less. At the end of the day, a compromise was worked out I think to the satisfaction of all of us.

Q And do you believe that you, as the Ambassador and as the chief of mission, are in the better place to assess what is needed?

A Yeah.

Q Than other components of Main State?

A I -- any ambassador worth his salt or her salt, unless they're extremely versed in security issues, which most of us are not, to that extent, rely on our RSOs.

And, at that particular point, I also had a military component. So it is very much a consensual kind of assessment of security. So I wouldn't say that I alone would never make that determination.

Q Do you think you were making unreasonable requests and demands of the State Department for the security resources that you wanted to maintain or have?

A I was only making the requests that I felt that were appropriate to our perception of what the reality was.

Q And do you believe that Chris Stevens had the same mindset when he was making requests, if you know?

A I assumed that Chris had the same perception of his role as I did, that his main concern was to make sure that his people had the security environment that was necessary for them to do their work.

Q You've described this sort of lively debate, give and take, and making decisions within the State Department. Yet, from our perspective, we see the 1998 -- or the 1999 ARB that was written in response to the 1998 East African bombings where the Ambassador then had requested additional security upgrades and additional staffing, and those were not honored. And we have similar findings in the Benghazi ones.

We, as a committee, are here to conduct this investigation to make recommendations to do what Congress can do to change it to improve security for overseas diplomats and our personnel over there.

What would you recommend? What changes do you recommend be made to improve overseas security for U.S. personnel?

A It depends on the circumstance. I mean, for example, in a place like Ghana, where I just was, we can -- circumstances are such that the threat is very low.

But we have to maintain a careful position and not get too complacent because there are -- the United States has enemies, you know, all over the world that want to do us harm.

So while the situation is different from what it is in Iraq and Egypt and other places, it still requires a very careful assessment on a daily, weekly, monthly basis for us.

So, as far as I'm concerned, in the places that I have been -- and I've been in several dangerous spots, et cetera -- the level of security has been adequate at least -- adequate at a minimum to enable us to do our jobs.

Are there improvements that can be made? Well, obviously, I mean, in any system you can make improvements. But, I mean, as a starting point, I think that the assessment of the people on the ground is critical.

And then the kind of debate that we had with respect to what happened in Libya, I think it was robust and, at the end of the day, it was vetted. And we came out with a compromise based on each individual player's interest in that particular situation, allocation of resources, et cetera.

Q Is there anything else that you would like this committee to consider as we go forward with our work to improve -- to do what Congress can do to improve the State Department?

A No. I really can't think of anything.

Ms. Jackson. Then, we are going to conclude this round of questioning and take a short break and turn it over to our colleagues.

A Okay.

[Recess.]

RPTR KERR

EDTR SECKMAN

[2:30 p.m.]

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q We'll go back on the record. It's 2:30, and I wanted to just start out by revisiting with you a little bit about what had been discussed around some of the staffing discussion challenges you faced as chief of mission during your time in Libya, and again focusing on the time from the reopening of the Embassy in Tripoli through your departure in May 2012.

You had indicated that you had discussions with the principal officers that spanned the time you were there who had been located in Benghazi and that they had expressed concerns and complaints, and you talked about those complaints being related to their inability to move off -- go off compound and, in their view, be able to do their job. Is that --

A Yes.

Q Did they -- do you recall them expressing to you concerns about security while on compound, in particular?

A No.

Q And did any of them convey to you a desire to leave Benghazi?

A No.

Q Now, in terms of their frustration, it sounded to me like some of their frustration was their belief that they were not then able to do their job. I think you said they said they felt they could not

do their job. Is that --

A That's correct.

Q And by doing their job, is it accurate to say that was them being able to get outside of the mission and meet, as you explained to us much earlier today, kind of meet with their contacts on the ground?

A Yes.

Q Establish relationships?

A Yes.

Q Did they -- even though they were frustrated at the time, did they ever convey to you, the principal officers during that time, their belief that there was not a continued value to remaining in Benghazi?

A No.

Q From your position as chief of mission, did you feel that the work they were still able to do was still valuable to you?

A Yes.

Q And did you ever hear from individuals in Washington that they felt that the work that was coming out of Benghazi, in particular, was not valuable to them?

A No.

Q Did they ever express the converse, that it actually was valuable to them?

A I don't recall comments to that effect.

Q But, overall, with regard to the U.S. presence in Libya, which would have included reporting from Benghazi, were you getting

positive feedback about the work that you all were able to do in the country during that period from --

A Yes, uh-huh. It was a very difficult situation, so the work we were able to do was -- I think was very appreciated, very much appreciated.

Q And when you say it was a very difficult situation, you had been asked to compare and contrast a little bit Tripoli and Benghazi, so when you say it was a very difficult situation, you mean that -- are you excluding Tripoli, or was it both difficult in Tripoli and in Benghazi?

A Well, I think the situation in Tripoli continued to be unsettled, and as I said, the situation in Benghazi appeared to be getting increasingly troublesome in the spring of 2012.

Q So turning a little bit to that issue, I wanted to get a sense from you as chief of mission and through your experience a little bit more about how emergency action committees work and what function they serve, both for chief of mission as well as for decisionmakers throughout the Department and across bureaus.

So can you just give me a sense -- and let's just again talk about specific to your time in Libya. Well, first of all, what is an Emergency Action Committee, and what is its generalized role?

A Emergency Action Committee is a committee formed of appropriate usually heads of section, heads of agencies in an embassy, not necessarily every agency and head, but those who have -- who have a need to know and who have a need to participate in decisions regarding

security of mission personnel.

By and large, I mean, in a big embassy, you can't -- it's impossible to have an EAC consisting of every agency and every section head, so sometimes it's a very selective process. But your main participants would be usually either the ambassador or DCM, political counselor, economic counselor, consular, RSO, any other intelligence agency that might, you know, be at post. That would be the core of the -- and management, obviously. That would be the core of an EAC.

And the EAC is convened through either on a regular basis, just to discuss the general situation in the country, or on an emergency basis, to discuss a particular event that may have happened.

For example, in Libya, when the WikiLeaks came out, it was clear that we were going to face some kind of problem, so we convened an EAC to discuss, do we need to take any special measures? Do we think that the Libyan Government is going to take any action against us directly? What extra security precautions should mission personnel take because of this particular event? So that's the way it usually works.

Q Uh-huh. And in addition to those convenings of an EAC to address a specific incident or concern, you indicated that they could also be convened on a more routine basis, and would some of the purpose in convening on a more routine basis be, I think as you indicated, to do routine assessments of the security environment and the security posture?

A Yes.

Q And that would be one mechanism for monitoring trends over

time with regard to security?

A Yes. I mean, you might -- for example, each post, normally, especially in your high-threat post, you would have a set of tripwires that in case such and such happened, this is what we need to do. If it gets to this point, and et cetera, in terms of an escalating series of threats.

So you would normally, in any embassy, meet periodically in the absence of any real crises to say, "are our tripwires still appropriate and has the situation changed," just to make sure that everybody was aware, in totality, the total security situation at any given time.

Q And in addition to making everyone aware, it also served as some sort of institutional knowledge over time about how a security environment may be improving or a security environment may be deteriorating. Is that --

A Yes.

Q -- fair to say?

A Uh-huh.

Q And in addition to making these assessments over time or with regard to a specific incident, does the EAC also have a role in making recommendations for how to address them? I think you indicated with regard to the particular WikiLeaks, that it seemed like that was one of the functions, but would that be a routine function of the EAC?

A That's part and parcel of part of the EAC's responsibilities.

Q And certainly, as a chief of mission, you might participate

in some, and you would then rely upon the information coming out of that mechanism to help you make appropriate decisions?

A Yes.

Q And, presumably, that information from an EAC also then gets conveyed outside of, in your specific incident in the timeframe, outside of Libya, it gets sent back to personnel in the Department who are in D.C.?

A That's the normal procedure, yes.

Q And this would be the mechanism for making sure that they were kept up to date on information. Is that accurate?

A Yes.

Q And that they understood what recommendations had been made. Would that be accurate?

A Yes.

Q And that to the extent there were assessments of the security environment, they were kept apprised of what the assessments on the ground were of the security environment?

A Yes.

Q In addition to recommending -- in the range of things that can be recommended by an EAC, I presume they can recommend discrete measures to improve physical security. Would that be --

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q They could make recommendations regarding security staffing?

A They could, uh-huh.

Q They could make recommendations. You had indicated tripwires. Tripwires also play a role, as I understand it, in determining when a -- certainly triggering a discussion and helping assess when consideration should be made as to potential departure?

A Yes.

Q So does an EAC -- an EAC can also then recommend their authorized or ordered departure?

A They can recommend, right, to Washington. The decision is made in Washington, but that's certainly part and parcel of the mandate given to EACs.

Q In your years of service, just more generally speaking now for a moment, have -- do you recall instances where an Emergency Action Committee on the ground did make a recommendation up for departure that was then disagreed with or overridden?

A I can't recall an instance where a decision was overridden.

Q With regard to departing from --

A Right.

Q -- post?

A Right.

Ms. Sawyer. I'm going to now show you what has been marked as exhibit 8 for identification purposes, and that document bears identification No. 5391065.

[Cretz Exhibit No. 8

Was marked for identification.]

Ms. Sawyer. It's a 2-page document. It has been copied

two-sided, so the second page is just on the back of that first, and we'll go off the record and just give you an opportunity to take a look at that.

[Discussion off the record.]

Mr. Cretz. Okay.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Okay. We're back on the record. Just directing your attention to the top. The "from" line is [REDACTED]. Do you recall him being the principal officer in Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q And then the "to" line includes [REDACTED]. We've already spoken about her. She was your deputy chief of mission. It then has a designation, SES-0. Do you have any sense what that group would have included?

A I think this would have included the Secretary's staff, including the secretariat, et cetera, not just her inner circle but the operation center, the executive secretariat, which you know, is responsible for moving all the paper through the buildings.

Q And then do you have any sense of what SWO-cable?

A This is the senior watch officer in the operations center, the 24-hour center, so they would get this as well.

Q Mr. Maxwell, I think we already mentioned --

A Right.

Q -- today. NEA-MAG-DL. Is that --

A I don't know what a "DL" stands for, but MAG-DL, I don't

know what that is. I know it's NEA's Office for the Maghreb, but "DL," I'm not sure what that is.

Q And then Mr. [REDACTED] and Ms. [REDACTED], I think we both -- you had been asked about --

A They were in management, yeah, involved in management of the post, yeah.

Q And then that "cc" line includes you.

A Uh-huh.

Q It also includes Mr. [REDACTED], whose name has come a few times today.

A Uh-huh.

Q He was your regional security officer --

A Yes. Right.

Q -- in Tripoli.

A Uh-huh.

Q Mr. [REDACTED], do you recall him as being a DS agent in Benghazi?

A No, I don't. No.

Q Mr. [REDACTED], do you recall --

A No, I don't.

Q -- whether he was a DS agent?

A I don't recall his name.

Q And then, at the very end there, [REDACTED]

A I don't remember his name.

Q Okay. But certainly I think you indicated before that you

indicated an RSO would be involved in the EAC, so the Diplomatic Security representatives and then bureau, for lack of a better word, would be represented in the EAC. Is that accurate?

A Yeah. I mean, the relevant constituent parts of the mission, and as you can see, this is a -- they covered a wide range of territory, yeah.

Q Yes. This was an EAC -- the attached -- the subject line is, "Re: Benghazi EAC-December 21, 2011."

A Uh-huh.

Q And then, in that first paragraph there, there's a summary, and it says, quote, "On December 21, the principal officer chaired a meeting of U.S. Mission Benghazi's core Emergency Action Committee (EAC). The EAC discussed post's current security posture, including physical security and its movement security procedures. Although the allover security environment has been gradually improving," and it goes on, "in light of reported threat over the holiday period posed by Qadhafi regime loyalists and the current level of mission security personnel, the EAC recommended improving the physical standards of current U.S. mission compound complex, moving all COM," chief of mission, "personnel, into Villas B and C and leaving Villa A unoccupied. The EAC recommended sustaining the mission's current movement security procedures but will be particularly vigilant and unpredictable, given the more uncertain security environment summary."

So there is a summary there, and it mentions that although the overall security environment has gradually improved, there apparently

had been a particularized threat at that point in time or concern about Qadhafi regime loyalists.

First, do you recall, to the extent you recall, the assessment, which seems a broader assessment about the overall security environment, of things gradually improving? Did that resonate at the time, to the extent you remember, with your sense of the environment in Benghazi in December of 2011 anyway?

A Yeah, that pretty much comports with what our assessment was as well.

Q And they note that there was a threat over the holiday period posed by Qadhafi regime loyalists. Do you recall -- again, you had talked about the -- some of the incidents and concerns not targeting Western interests.

A Uh-huh.

Q Do you have a recollection as to whether or not this was a particular concern about Qadhafi regime loyalists vis-à-vis U.S. interests?

A There was a general concern that these stray elements were still roaming around the country, but to my knowledge, there was never a threat indicated directly targeting U.S. or Western interests by Qadhafi loyalists.

Q So the EAC then, if you take a look at paragraph 4, which continues on to page 2, and then at the very end -- so I think it's on the -- it would be on the second page of your document, or the back page of your document. They note that they have some

recommendations --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- for physical security upgrades, and the last sentence says: "The EAC recommended submitting a list of prioritized physical security upgrades to be implemented in the very near term and will shortly provide these to Washington via separate cover," end quote.

So, again, that would have been another role of the EAC --

A Sure.

Q -- to recommend and come up with the specific recommendations?

A Yes. Uh-huh.

Q And in this particular instance, your RSO in Tripoli was also included on --

A Yes.

Q -- this traffic?

A Uh-huh.

Q So he certainly would have been moved and aware --

A Absolutely.

Q -- of the request?

A Yeah.

Q On that final paragraph, paragraph 6, there is, "A followup EAC will be held on about 04 January 2012 to reassess the local security and threat environment and discuss appropriate security measures. The mission will also review its established tripwires in the runup to the next EAC meeting," end quote.

I think that gets at a little bit what you were explaining to me about the usefulness or the utility or using EACs to do more routine assessments on security.

A Right. It's a continuing process, especially in a high-threat environment.

Q Now, given the information that's contained in here that both captures, at times, specific security concerns as well as overall security assessments as well as security recommendations up to and including a recommendation to depart and leave a particular location, would you expect for readout summaries or cables, however this information is captured, to have accurately reflected the information on the ground?

A My experience has been that people on the ground are the best source of information for the reality in that particular environment, so I -- yeah, I'm sorry.

Q And in fact, would they not have every incentive to be entirely accurate and honest in conveying this information so that they could both provide the assessment and get what they needed?

A Absolutely. I mean, these are very serious issues. You know, these are all issues that deal with the safety of personnel, which is the number 1 concern of missions overseas. So your EAC is a -- it has to be accurate, it has to make the correct assessment, has to have access to all the information, and then it's got to make sure that it's recommendations reflect appropriately the reality on the ground.

Q And if it did not accurately and appropriately reflect the

reality on the ground, that then would have a negative -- potential negative impact on certainly the folks who aren't on the ground, the people who are relying on this or in Washington?

A Sure.

Q Their ability to understand that reality?

A It's as valuable as any reporting cable which attempts to, for example, analyze the relevant political situation in the country. Although, you know, when you do reporting, you have some leeway to be wrong. EAC issues, you don't have very much leeway. I mean, this is -- these are all safety issues. You can't get around them.

Q So it's pretty critical, and you would expect the individuals offering it or reviewing it to have made their best good faith effort to be as honest as possible?

A Yes, because people's lives are involved.

Q And with particular regard to exhibit 8, the December 21, 2011, EAC that we've just talked about, with particular regard to this, were you ever told by anyone that this was not accurate and that it downplayed the seriousness of the security in Benghazi?

A I don't recall any message from anybody to that effect.

Q And then, more broadly, about any of the Emergency Action Committee communications that occurred during your time in Tripoli, were you ever told by anyone that they downplayed the seriousness of either particular incidents in Benghazi or the overall security environment?

A No. When it comes to, I mean, reactions to EACs or

reactions to assessment on the ground, especially on security, there's very little -- I can't remember an instance, maybe throughout my career, where somebody has said, "No, no, that's not as serious as you think it is."

Q So, in that dynamic, have you ever experienced yourself or had anyone relayed to you that they felt that they had been pressured not to include information in an EAC that they thought was important to include in that?

A No.

Q And when I say "EAC," I mean the summary --

A Right.

Q -- Emergency Action Committee?

A No, never.

Q Anyone who alleged they were retaliated against because they had been too honest --

A No.

Q -- in the Emergency Action Committee summary?

A No.

Q Now, during your time -- and I think I asked this in the first hour, so forgive me.

A Uh-huh.

Q But during your time, again, from the reopening of Embassy Tripoli through when you departed, did any of the Emergency Action Committee -- committees that were convened in Benghazi recommend departing Benghazi?

A Not to my recollection.

Q And now, setting aside the EAC, that obviously is a key mechanism and valuable mechanism, but setting that aside, would you, as the chief of mission in Libya, have felt comfortable reaching out, aside from that, had you had concerns, to share them with, for example, Assistant Secretary Boswell?

A Again, if it's any issue related to the safety of mission personnel, a chief of mission, it's incumbent upon that chief of mission to express that particular concern. You don't withhold an expression of concern out of any reason whatsoever. I mean, as long as it's based on what you believe to be a factual assessment of a particular situation.

Q So moving ahead to when you departed in May 2012, I think you mentioned in the very first hour of our questions that you would have provided an assessment, an overview of your time there and, presumably, also a sense of your recommendations or observations for the U.S. moving forward. Is that accurate, that you would have tried to provide that kind of an overview?

A Yes.

Q And, at that point in time, did you believe and did you express that you thought maintaining a presence in both Libya and also, in particular, Benghazi would have been valuable?

A I can't say in which -- under which format, whether it was my final observations or whatever that I did that, but that had been a constant theme from me from the start of my tour in Libya that

Benghazi -- well, I mean, obviously, since the revolution, that a presence in Benghazi was absolutely essential.

Q And so the best you can recall, what was your sense of what challenges lie ahead for Libya? I mean, we were at that -- you were at that point a month or so from --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- the first elections, as you've indicated, in 42 years, but what was your sense of what challenges?

A Well, number one, you know, Qadhafi ruled for 40 years and didn't allow the emergence of any institution that could rival his power and the influence of he and his small clique over the people and government of Libya, so consequently, after the fall, there really was nothing there. There was no institutions, you know, ministries. They never operated as a real government because Qadhafi ruled the roost.

So my concerns were, number one, that we needed to find a way to help them build their infrastructure in terms of developing independent and capable institutions. My second concern was that there had to be a way to end the strife among the militias and that involved getting a strong and capable central government.

We had to deal with, you know, making sure that the oil resource, which was really the only resource that they depended on, was developed in a reasonable way and that the proceeds made their way back to the -- to the people of Libya. We had to ensure that there was a capable military, a capable counterintelligence, a counterterrorism capability as well.

So these were all kind of concerns that I had mentioned. The borders were porous. There had to be some kind of way to establish a border regime. There was a continuing threat of weapons, which had been collected by the Qadhafi regime and then loose, you know, basically spread throughout the country and began to be making their way through the region in Africa, et cetera, so that had to be a way to get control of that, so there were a lot of problems in the post-Qadhafi era.

Q And with that, you know, magnitude of challenges that lie ahead, did you expect that it was going to be a quick process to being able to have a fully stable Libya?

A No, definitely not.

Q So these challenges would remain for some period of months, up to potentially years as the country tried to move forward to a new --

A Uh-huh. Well, you have to remember that there was no political class in Libya. There were some technocrats, but politics, as we define it, had not been exercised in Libya since the beginning of the Qadhafi regime, so you didn't have people who knew politics. They don't know how to rule the country. They didn't know how the compromise, et cetera. There were no institutions. Yeah, and it was still in a state of chaos, and this was literally nation-building from the bottom floor, literally from the bottom floor because they had nothing there to build on. So this was going to take years and years and years. There's no doubt.

Q And with regard to the U.S., United States' engagement, involvement, and to the extent you can recall, would you have

recommended that the U.S. become more engaged, less engaged? I know that you've already said that you did not recommend that we leave altogether, but do you have a sense of whether you felt it was important for us to increase our engagement as opposed to decrease our engagement?

A Well, I think it was critical that the United States continue to play a vital role. I mean, given our past history, given what we did on the intervention, and given the fact that there was a real affection for the United States in the country in the aftermath of what we had done along with the French and British and others to overthrow Qadhafi, and I would have liked to have seen a more robust program.

But the truth of the matter was that when you don't have a functioning government, how do you provide resources to that government when there's no absorptive capacity? So this is the main problem that we ran into in the post-war situation. You know, I can't say that there was a huge appetite in Washington to put hundreds of millions of dollars into Libya, but I can say there was an interest in ensuring, you know, our role there, ensuring that this evolving nation developed in a democratic tradition. But the truth is that there was no absorptive capacity to receive assistance and to help develop the nation along that way.

Q And do you recall, as of May, when you were leaving, May 2012, whether you felt a sense of optimism, a sense of pessimism about the prospects in Libya going forward?

A I was an optimist when I left because I felt that this

was -- the overwhelming desire of Libyans for democracy was palpable. While there were -- there was a, certainly the existence of an Islamic jihadist element, by and large, Libyan people were secular, and I really did not -- I was not afraid of the fact that this would become an Islamic theocracy of any kind.

So I was optimistic at that particular point. I knew it was going to be very hard, but I really believed that it was going to work out.

Q And I think when we were discussing, you know, some of the challenges that lied ahead, I think the notion of nation-building came up. Sometimes the United States gets criticized for --

A Uh-huh.

Q -- that very term. I just want to make sure that I'm clear, that I understand that the record is clear, my sense was that you're reflecting that Libya was engaged in the process of nation-building?

A Yes.

Q And that our presence and our interests would certainly be in supporting their efforts to make sure that that happened?

A Right, I agree.

Q Now, in the last hour, you talked with my colleagues a little bit about the Accountability Review Board. You know, there have been some allegations, not particular to you, but some allegations that the ARB may not have received all the information that it needed to be able to do its job fully and properly. You did speak with the ARB. Is that correct?

A Yes, I did.

Q And did you feel that you could be fully forthcoming with the ARB about your experience in Libya?

A Yes.

Q Did you withhold any information from what you conveyed to the ARB about your time there?

A Not to my recollection.

Q And were you under pressure from anyone?

A No.

Q To --

Mr. Evers. Let her finish.

Mr. Cretz. I'm sorry.

BY MS. SAWYER:

Q Were you under pressure from anyone to withhold information or convey facts in any particular way when you spoke with the ARB?

A No.

Q Pressure.

A I was just making sure there was a decent interval.

Q You had indicated that you had had an opportunity to look at the report but that some period of time had passed, and I just wanted to ask you about one particular aspect that we are sometimes asked about or our members are asked about.

On the second page of the report, the ARB states the following, and I'll just quote: "The Benghazi attacks took place against a backdrop of significantly increased demands on U.S. diplomats to be present in the world's most dangerous places to advance American

interests and connect with populations beyond capitals and beyond host government's reach. With State Department civilians at the forefront of U.S. efforts to stabilize and build capacity in Iraq as the U.S. Military draws down in Afghanistan and with security threats growing in volatile environments where the U.S. military is not present, from Peshawar to Bamako, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security is being stretched to the limit as never before. DS, overall, has done a fine job protecting thousands of employees in some 273 U.S. diplomatic missions around the world. No diplomatic presence is without risk, given past attempt by terrorists to pursue U.S. targets worldwide. And the total elimination of risk is a nonstarter for U.S. diplomacy, given the need for U.S. Government to be present in places where stability and security are often most profoundly lacking and host government support is sometimes minimal to nonexistent."

So you have been on the front lines, and you certainly were in Libya. You've been a career diplomat and servant in that public service. Would you agree that it remains important for the U.S. to have a presence, even in places that are dangerous and pose security risks to personnel?

A If we have determined that it's in the U.S. interest that we have -- that we be present in a place, then I think that as long as we're able to effect a certain mitigation of the risk to the point where we're able to do the kind of job that we need to do, I would say that we need to do it. If there is a determination made that the situation is beyond the ability of our DS people to ensure the safety

of our personnel, with minimal risk, not the absence of risk -- I don't think any of us who serve and certainly career officers ever anticipate that we will be in a place that has no risk whatsoever. I think we take that as part and parcel of our jobs and our responsibilities and our dedication to service. None of us are cowboys, believe me, you know. We are not looking for excitement, adventure, and danger. We are looking for at least an environment where risk is mitigated to the point where we can at least carry out our jobs, and yes, I do agree that that is a very accurate reflection.

Q And in instances where the calculus is that it is, you know, too dangerous to be -- or we are not there, can you give us a sense, it would be helpful, I think, for the members, as well as the American public to understand, what the consequences are where America cannot be present? You saw it a little -- for a little while, we saw it in Libya. We were not present in Libya, I think you said, for 36 years at the time --

A That's right.

Q -- that you went back, and we established full diplomatic relationships under George W. Bush's administration when Condoleezza Rice was the Secretary of State. Can you just share, from your perspective, what are the consequences when we cannot be present?

A Well, if we just take a look, for example, at the Middle East, as -- when I was in Damascus in 1986, we were on the verge of even considering shutting down that post because of certain events that had happened, and Secretary at the time, George Shultz said: Look,

take a look at the region. We're blind literally in Iran. Lebanon is a caldron. If we leave Syria, we're going to be blind in a whole area, which is, you know, completely relevant to American interests in the Middle East.

And I think we can see it today. I mean, what do we know about Iran? Look how critical it's been. Now, given that's a different situation because the internal situation there probably doesn't allow for us to mitigate risk to the extent that we need to, but had we had a presence in Iran over the last, you know, 35 years or at least something, maybe we would have had a better understanding of the country, et cetera, and I think, you know, just the play out of the nuclear deal is showing us that we really needed to know more about that country in order to fully inform our public. So I think there's a -- look at North Korea. We don't have a major presence there, and look what they've developed.

So I think, to the extent possible, we need to be in these places. It's critical for our interests.

Q You know, and again, you started your response to my question about being in places that are potentially dangerous and the importance of that by saying certainly when the assessment is that we can be there.

A Uh-huh.

Q And you have to make an assessment of the risk. Turning back again just to your experience in Libya, again, from the reopening of the Embassy in September 2011. In your communications with

personnel on the ground in Benghazi, did any of them ever express to you, as the chief of mission, that they believe that the mission in Benghazi was a, quote, "suicide mission"?

A No.

Q And did any of them, in particular, tell you or did you ever hear anyone else convey a concern that any of the RSOs or the security personnel had been told not to raise concerns about the security posture or the security environment in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Would you have expected if any personnel on the ground, in particular, security personnel on the ground in Benghazi had those beliefs, they would have conveyed them either to you or someone like Ms. [REDACTED]?

A Yes.

Q Now, I wanted to just briefly turn to the exhibits that you were shown by my colleagues in the last hour. I just had a couple of questions. Just turning to exhibit 5, which is a -- is the letter to --

A Yes.

Q -- Mr. Shapiro. It indicates in that last paragraph, "We very much look forward to presenting Ambassador Cretz our credentials and a capabilities brief." They invited you, via Mr. Shapiro, to contact them. I think you were asked, I just want to make perfectly clear, Mr. Shapiro never asked you to contact Mr. Grange?

A To my recollection, no.

Q And you did not contact Mr. Grange?

A Again, to my recollection, no.

Q And at this point in time, you would have been -- it was 4 January 2012, you would have been in Tripoli, is that accurate, at the Embassy?

A Yes.

Q I'm not asking. Just to be clear, not necessarily on that particular date, but overall in that timeframe?

A Right. Uh-huh.

Q If a U.S. company is going to or is doing business in Libya or any other country where there is an embassy, is it unusual for them to reach out and contact the embassy?

A No.

Q To introduce themselves to the embassy?

A No.

Q Is that necessarily an inherent conflict of interest for the embassy to know who is doing business in the country?

A No.

Q Were you ever -- did you ever take any action while you were in country to benefit Osprey Global Solutions, LLC?

A No.

Q Mr. Grange, in particular?

A No.

Q Did you take any action on his behalf?

A No.

Q Then I would just turn your attention to the next exhibit,

which was exhibit 6, that you were asked about by my colleague. You were asked if you had an understanding -- and the subject line of exhibit 6 down at the bottom of the message, the subject line says, "Re: Latest from HRC's contact"?

A Uh-huh.

Q And you were asked if you had an understanding as to who "HRC" was, and you indicated that was Secretary Clinton. Is that accurate?

A I assumed that Hilary Rodham Clinton, yes. Uh-huh.

Q Is there anything inherently wrong with Mr. Sullivan's passing along to you, and in this case, Mr. Feltman, information that Secretary Clinton has received?

A No. The -- you know, the situation in Libya, even before the revolution, was difficult to ferret out because you have circles within circles of rumor and suspicion, et cetera. And in a post-revolutionary situation, where things are still very much fluid, information and especially the real reality of the situation is very difficult to come by.

So we depend on several different sources to try to get a sense of really what reality is. So if someone comes to me with a piece of information, you know, I would -- it would be incumbent on me to see if I could confirm it or get it denied. So this sometimes proved useful, as a matter of fact.

Q And was there anything inappropriate with Mr. Sullivan asking you, as the chief of mission, the person on the ground there,

for feedback on the information that had been passed to the Secretary and the Department?

A No.

Q Were you ever asked to take any action whatsoever, based on the information that had been conveyed to you for your feedback?

A No. The only action I was asked for was what are my views on this.

Q Was it ever conveyed to you that Mr. Sullivan or anyone else was relying upon the information contained in -- I'll just be specific -- with regard to exhibit 6 for -- in order to be making any particular decision?

A No.

Q And then, just with regard to exhibit 7, again, this is a document that my colleagues asked you about, and down at the bottom, again, Mr. Sullivan is asked -- sending this to you, and again, in this instance, Mr. Feltman. Again, was there anything wrong with him sending this information on to you and seeking your feedback on it?

A Not in my view.

Q And with regard to this document or any document that might have been similar to it, were you ever asked to take any action based on the information that had passed to you?

A No.

Q Been passed to you.

Okay. I'm going to shift gears, and there have been public allegations in the time since the attacks that have been levied with

regard to the attacks. It's our understanding that the committee is investigating these allegations, even in some instances where they may already have been investigated, so we are asking witnesses who come before the committee to answer and provide us with any firsthand evidence or information they may have with regard to these allegations.

Certainly there have been plenty of opinions levied about the attacks, and there has been plenty of speculation, and what we're really looking for here is just firsthand information or any evidence you might have that would help put to rest these allegations once and for all.

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

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

A No.

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

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April 2012 cable denying security to Libya. The Washington Post Fact Checker evaluated this claim and gave it four Pinocchios, its highest award for false claims.

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

A No.

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

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton misrepresented or fabricated intelligence on the risk posed by 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 spring 2011?

A No.

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

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

A No.

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

A No.

Q A team of CIA security personnel was temporarily delayed from departing the Annex to assist the Special Mission Compound, and there have been a number of allegations about the cause and the appropriateness of that delay. The House Intelligence Committee issued a bipartisan report concluding that the team was not ordered to stand down but that instead they 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 standdown order to CIA personnel?

A No.

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

A No.

Q A concern has been raised by one individual that in the course of producing documents to the Accountability Review Board, damaging documents may have been removed or scrubbed out of that

production.

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

A No.

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

A No.

Q Let me ask these questions also for documents provided to Congress. Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the materials that were provided to Congress?

A No.

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

Do you any evidence that CIA Deputy Direct 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 misrepresentation when she spoke on the Sunday talk shows about the Benghazi attacks.

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

A No.

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

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

A No.

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

A Republican staff report issued by the House Armed Services Committee found that, quote, "there was no standdown ordered issued

to U.S. Military personnel in Tripoli who sought to join the fight in Benghazi," end quote.

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

A No.

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

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

A No.

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

A No.

Q Okay. I think that concludes our questions, and I just want to give you an opportunity, Ambassador, to the extent you have anything you would like to share after having had us ask you questions, us for

2 hours, our colleagues for 2 hours as well, is there anything you would like to share with us and the committee?

A No, I think we covered a lot of ground.

Ms. Clarke. We do have a few questions for you, classified questions, so --

Ms. Sawyer. Sure. We can go off the record. This would -- well, before we go off the record. So this would conclude certainly the unclassified portion of the interview. I do want to thank you, Ambassador Cretz, for your time here today and certainly for your many years of service to the United States. We truly appreciate it.

The ranking member had hoped to be able to come by. He thought that your perspective, particularly on the policy and mission, would be truly invaluable to the committee. He had hoped to make it. He was sorry that he could not but did want us to convey his thanks for being here.

Mr. Cretz. Thank you.

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

[Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m., the committee proceeded in closed session.]

Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

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

Witness Name

Date

Errata Sheet

Select Committee on Benghazi

The witness reviewed the accompanying transcript, certified its accuracy, and declined to provide corrections to the transcript.