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Classification Key:

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS,

joint with

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD B. LANDOLT

Tuesday, March 18, 2014

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, commencing at 10 a.m.

[REDACTED]

Participant Key

AR = Armed Services Committee Republican staffer

AD = Armed Services Committee Democratic staffer

OR = Oversight and Government Reform Committee Republican staffer

OD = Oversight and Government Reform Committee Democratic staffer

[REDACTED]

AR2 [REDACTED]. This is a transcribed interview of Admiral Richard Landolt.

Welcome, and thank you, Admiral Landolt, for coming today.

Admiral Landolt. Sure.

AR2 [REDACTED]. Those in the room have already introduced themselves, and the record of our proceedings will show who is in attendance; however, for the record, I am AR2 [REDACTED], professional staff member with the House Armed Services Committee.

As you may know, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Armed Services are among the committees in the U.S. House of Representatives that are investigating many aspects of the attack on U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya, September 2012. The topics being considered include how the U.S. Government was prepared in advance of these attacks, how it responded once the attacks started, and what changes have been instituted as a result of lessons learned.

I'm joined today by colleagues representing the chairman and ranking member minority members of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Armed Services. In order to simplify our proceedings, I'm making these introductory remarks, and I believe OR2 [REDACTED] will start the questioning. Please understand that this interview is an equal and joint effort of both committees.

Admiral Landolt. Okay.

AR2 [REDACTED]. We will proceed in the following way. I and a representative of the other committee's chairman will ask questions for the first hour. Then representatives of the ranking member minority

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

members will have an hour to pose questions. We will alternate this way until our questions are completed. We will recess for a short lunch and take other breaks, but please let us know when we are switching questioners if you need some additional time for any reason.

Admiral Landolt. Okay.

AR2 [REDACTED]. During our questioning we will aim to have only one questioner at a time. An exception to this may occur if an additional staff member requires a follow-up or clarification. In such an instance, it is usually most efficient to do that as we proceed rather than at the end.

Because obviously the transcriptionist cannot record gestures, we ask that you answer orally. If you forget to do this, the transcriptionist may remind you to do so. The transcriptionist may also ask you to spell certain terms or unusual phrases you might use in your answers.

We hope to proceed methodically and generally chronologically. Some of our questions might appear to be basic, but this is done to help us clearly establish facts and to clearly understand the situation in Libya.

We ask that you give complete and fulsome replies to questions based on your best recollections. Please provide unclassified information to the greatest extent possible. If it is necessary to provide classified information in response to questions, everyone in this room is cleared to Top Secret, and therefore, you should not hesitate to provide relevant information or details up to that

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

classification level.

Admiral Landolt. Okay.

AR2 [REDACTED]. Furthermore, if a question is unclear, or you're uncertain in your response, please let us know. If you do not know the answer to a question or do not remember, simply say so.

You should also understand that although this interview is not under oath, by law you are required to answer questions from Congress truthfully, including questions posed by staffers in interviews such as this. Do you understand these circumstances?

Admiral Landolt. I do.

AR2 [REDACTED]. Is there any reason you are unable to provide your own truthful answers to today's questions.

Admiral Landolt. None.

AR2 [REDACTED]. Pursuant to agreement between the Armed Services and Oversight and Government Reform Committees and the Department of Defense, a transcript of today's proceedings will be provided to the Department as soon as it is prepared. The Department will confirm that the transcript contains Top Secret material or, alternatively, will apply a lower classification to the document. The Department has also agreed to return the original transcripts to the committees along with a second version that includes only Secret information.

In conducting this work, the Department has agreed not to share the contents of previous interview transcripts with the interviewees subsequently appearing before the committee or to use these documents to prepare interviewees for their appearances.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

With this in mind, has the Department made any classified transcripts from previous interviews available to you in preparing for today?

Admiral Landolt. No.

AR2 [REDACTED]. Finally, I note that you are accompanied by an attorney from the Department of Defense. I ask the DOD counsel to please state your name for the record.

Mr. Richards. Edward Richards.

AR2 [REDACTED]. With these preliminary remarks concluded, do you have any introductory comment you wish to make?

Admiral Landolt. I do not.

Mr. Richards. No, thank you.

AR2 [REDACTED]. We very much appreciate your uniformed service and for your patience and participation today.

The clock now reads 10:10, and we will now start the first hour of questions from the representatives of the committee chairmen.

Admiral Landolt. Okay.

EXAMINATION

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Welcome, Admiral. Thanks for coming in.

A Sure.

Q Just I think what we want to do is to start out with some real basic introductory questions, and I think **AR2** [REDACTED] mentioned it in the preamble, but, again, just to reemphasize, I don't want you to take the basicness of these questions as a lack of awareness or knowledge

[REDACTED]

on the part of staff or disrespect to you at all.

A Sure.

Q I just want to establish for the record something.

We also have members who are on Oversight and Government Reform and don't do oversight of HASC or of DOD on an everyday basis than perhaps some of us do.

A Okay.

Q That's some of the reason behind the questions that I want to get to first.

So, if you can just start out, I believe you're retired now; is that correct?

A I am. I retired on the 1st of February after 32 years, 7 months and 19 days.

Q That's precise. Thank you.

And what was your final rank and your last assignment with the Navy?

A I retired as a Rear Admiral Upper Half, two-star, and my last assignment was as a Director of Operations for U.S. Africa Command.

Q And that was a J3; is that right, sir?

A That would be the J3, correct.

Q And how long was your assignment at AFRICOM?

A I started April of 2012 and left on the 4th of January, 2014. I'd call it 20 months.

Q April 2012 to January '14?

A Correct.

Q And how did you come to be assigned as the J3 for AFRICOM?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

How did that come about?

A I was told by Vice Admiral Leidig that I was nominated for the job by the Navy, and he recommended I take the job. And I think he had a conversation with General Ham, and before I knew it, there I was out of my Pentagon office in Stuttgart, Germany.

Q Any particular factors why AFRICOM? Do you have any prior experience on that continent, for example?

A I did. Back when I was a captain, I did a tour on the NATO staff in Naples, Italy, and it was NATO staff, but AFRICOM was standing up, and the future components of Africa Command was going to be the Commander of Naval Forces Europe, now known as Commander of Naval Forces Europe and Africa, and I knew Admiral Leidig from those days. He was a two-star. I was a four-star senior aide. I made multiple trips down to the African Continent. I was not unfamiliar with the region. We stood up something called Africa Partnership Station during that time at Africa, and Africa Command still employs. So I had some background for a job such as the J3.

Q And if you could, walk us through the responsibilities of a J3 in a combatant command liked AFRICOM.

A Well, Director of Operations, he would have oversight of forces deploying to or deployed in the area of responsibility for a combatant command, be they Army, Air Force, Navy, Special Forces, Coast Guard, with some knowledge of interagency assets or capabilities in the region as well. Furthermore, in this job that I think is unique is that we have cyber capabilities that came under my jurisdiction.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q So is it fair to say at any given time you are tracking deployed forces in your area of responsibility?

A Tracking deployed forces and those training to deploy into the arena, into the area of responsibility.

Q Now, with respect to forces preparing to deploy, what role does a J3 play in planning those deployments or planning the commission for those units?

A Africa Partnership Station changes every year in the sense that you can go to different countries, and you want to satisfy those countries' desires, and so you'll tailor the capability to what those countries desire. Normally this is in more of a Coast Guard type of capability. I wouldn't call it Blue Water Navy, more littoral.

[REDACTED]

Q And then in a crisis situation, what role would you play as a J3; not necessarily Benghazi, but any kind of crisis situation?

A I would probably spend a lot more time in our command center and on the phone or Tandberg with the joint staff talking with them

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

directly --

Q And as a J --

A -- and the commander coordinating.

Q Of course. Yeah.

And as a J3 in a Crisis situation, what's your role specifically with respect to planning response options?

A Right. Relate to the commander what's available to him, the readiness of said forces, guidance I receive from the Joint Staff. And this would be a conversation back and forth between the commander, a lot of it going on in parallel as well, you know. The commander often would talk directly to the chairman, for instance. I would talk directly to the Joint Staff J3.

Q Is it fair to say that as a J3 in a crisis situation, you would be involved in preparing options for your commander?

A I would, yes.

Q Admiral, if you could walk us through your reporting chain while you were the J3 at AFRICOM.

A My reporting chain would have been directly to the Commander, usually through the Deputy Chief of Military Operations, which is Admiral Leidig, L-E-I-D-I-G, Vice Admiral Leidig. He's a three-star deputy. AFRICOM has two deputies, which is unique when it comes to the COCOMs for that. We have a Deputy of Military Operations and a Deputy For Civil Military Affairs, who's a -- who's usually a former ambassador, and I worked for three different DCMAs, as we called them.

So I was in very close contact with Vice Admiral Leidig who was

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

relieved by Lieutenant General Steve Hummer this past July. So I got to work with General Hummer for about 6 months.

Q Okay.

A And then daily with General Ham or General Rodriguez, as the case was, and always keeping in touch with the Joint Staff. My counterpart would be the J3, which was, when I first got there, Lieutenant General Miller, Bob Miller, and then Kurt Tidd, Vice Admiral Kurt Tidd, T-I-D-D.

Q Was it General Miller who was your counterpart at the Joint Staff on the night of September 11, 2012?

A He was not. He had left, I think, by August.

Q Okay.

A And Admiral Tidd had just gotten in to see -- he hadn't been there very long -- or his deputy, who was Major General Darryl Roberson, who I'm sure you know.

I think it's important to note also, though, that I would be in constant contact with COCOMs at my fringes, CENTCOM and EUCOM, and that I would talk to their J3s direct often.

Q Okay. We'll talk about that as well.

I think what I'd like to do now -- and I know Elizabeth in the preamble discussed proceeding generally chronologically. I think what I'd liked to do, we have a number of other questions about DOD personnel deployed in Libya prior to the attack, security force assistance arrangements, things of that nature.

A Right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q What I'd like to do is just jump ahead, if I could, to the night of the attack on 11 September, 2012 --

A Right.

Q -- and talk about your optic at that point --

A Sure.

Q -- if I could.

So immediately preceding the news of the attack coming in, or not immediately preceding it, but did you have any discussions with military or State Department personnel about the security situation or security planning in the days leading up to September 11th, specifically with respect to the fact it was the anniversary of 9/11, for example?

A I didn't focus on 9/11, but I did have two conversations with Ambassador Stevens probably 6 weeks prior. I remember it was right around the 27th of July when I had a secure video teleconference with him, and this was to discuss the SST. And my job was to provide him options by direction of General Ham, and we were encouraging him to keep the SST at the time. And there was a cut-over date, I think it was 5 August, when that SST was going to turn into a -- like a 1206 or 1208, I forgot which one, but it was a counterterrorism effort, okay? But we didn't have privileges and immunities, as I recall, from the Libyan Government, and that was something he was very concerned about.

So I was getting push-back from him on this team there and how he wanted to maintain direct control of that team. Now, the -- that 12-0 -- I'm to call it a 1206, but that may not be right, so let me just say the 1206 program was a DOD program, so once that is signed by the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Secretary of Defense, that comes under General Ham's recognizance.

Q Sure.

A And so those troops that were assigned for that 1206 program come under General Ham's continent. I made that clear that we could not change that with Ambassador Stevens, but he kept revisiting the -- his desire to have control over those forces.

Q Since you brought up SST, we do want to ask about that. What was your understanding of why -- and just to help you out, we had access to documents which you haven't, so our understanding is that SST as a Chief of Mission authority entity ended as of 3 August, 2012. In other words, the first day of reverting to COCOM authority would have been 4 August, 2012.

A Okay.

Q Very close.

A All right.

Q What was your understanding of why the SST mission was not extended past that date?

A The State Department did not want that. When I say State Department, my impression was Ambassador Stevens, but I'm sure that was a discussion he had with State.

Q Okay.

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

Q Why -- excuse me, you said that the Department of Defense was interested in retaining the team there. Why is that? What was the Department's interest?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A I remember -- now, let me just preface it. I've been on the job for about 4 months, so I'm still trying to get my head around the strategic issues for AFRICOM, and General Ham viewed Libya as a strategic opportunity. Particularly, post, obviously, Saddam, we did want to get this government standing on its feet, and so engaging with their military was a strategic objective of General Ham's, and to keep those folks there, to maintain the relationship with the military there was key.

ARI [REDACTED]. Thank you.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q So, I know this would have been shortly after you came on board as J3 at AFRICOM, but on 9 July of 2012, Embassy Tripoli sent a cable to Washington requesting additional security personnel, which envisioned as one possibility of including some SST members, as SST in that security request. This was related to discussions going on at the State, which you may not be privy to, about whether or not to extend SST. Were you aware just of the cabling of the request gone forward; is this something you remember being made aware of?

A I don't. I remember a cable the previous Ambassador sent that was a very good overview of where we were. I think he left in June, and it's --

Q May have been, but yes.

A I forgot his name, but --

Q Ambassador Cretz?

A That's right. That's right. And I remember reading his cable, but I don't recall him talking about security --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Fair enough.

A -- in any detail. So, no, 9 July is not ringing a bell.

Q But you say you were aware in the lead-p to the end of SST as a Chief of Mission entity, you were aware of discussions between Ambassador Stevens and AFRICOM leadership about the future of DOD personnel in Libya?

A To some degree. I think that was more in the J5's lane initially and SOCAFRICA because he owned the people.

Q Okay.

A But I was -- I was -- because I wanted to have a sense of where the people are in Africa, I was aware of the SST. I wasn't involved in the day-to-day policy discussions of what might happen then.

Q Sure. Okay.

Any awareness prior to the attack about -- well, first of all, let me ask you this. As a J3, were you aware of the State Department Temporary Mission Facility in Benghazi?

A I was not.

Q The State Department facility?

A Oh, TMF, yes.

Q Yes.

A I recall being vaguely aware.

Q Uh-huh.

A Benghazi was a focus for me in a sense that we were tracking some of the militia camps, but I did not -- I was unaware of Ambassador Stevens' background. My previous tour had been in Asia.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Okay.

A And so the night Saddam went down, I was dealing with the tsunami in Japan, sharing the headlines with AFRICOM.

Q Sure.

A But, no, TMF didn't hit my radar until that night.

Q So I take it you weren't aware of any discussions that were ongoing about potentially extending the State Department presence in Benghazi; is that fair to say?

A I was not aware.

Q Were you aware of any --

A Now, let me --

Q Please.

A -- recall what I was aware of, okay, because I do recall the IED that -- and then that was my first indicator of, holy shit, we've got something in -- do I need to spell that for you? We've got something in Benghazi that's --

Q Yeah.

A And evidently enough people know about it that they put an IED. And I remember seeing a picture of the hole in the wall, and I think that was clearly June.

AA1 BY [REDACTED]:

Q But that's when you heard about the facility?

A That's when I recall it hit my radar and me going, we got to watch this.

AA2 BY [REDACTED]:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q [REDACTED], was it terribly surprising to you that if there was a State Department facility there, it ended up being a target of an IED, given the environment?

A I think it hit me more like this is just part of the region.

Q Yeah.

A This stuff happens more than we like to admit. You know, we are targets everywhere.

Q So, after that, the 6 June, 2012, IED attack on the Temporary Mission Facility, were you privy to any concerns about the safety or security of that facility in Benghazi?

A That was probably the first time where I said we'll have to watch this. And 6 June, that means I'd been in the job about 6 weeks, and by May I remember I was consumed with an operation going on out of Somalia.

Q Okay. With respect to the embassy in Tripoli, State Department embassy, I take it you were aware of that, of course?

A Right.

Q Were you aware of any particular security concerns, safety concerns with that facility?

A Not before 9/11, not that I recall. Well, I remember a couple of incidences that would continue to bring me back to Libya writ large. I remember the British Ambassador getting attacked and then leaving the country. I remember the incident with the militia at a road stop, which I think that was SST folks, and that was right around the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

time of the turnover.

Q 6 August?

A Okay. So -- and that got in a lot of high-level attention and 20 questions from the Joint Staff.

So, yes, I was -- I was concerned, but not in a position to impact other than to voice my concerns with General Ham or Joint Staff that, you know, we'll all keep an eyeball on this.

Q Sure.

AR1 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Had you ever been to Libya?

A I have not.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A That night was the first I heard about it.

Q Okay.

AR1 BY [REDACTED]:

[REDACTED]

A Subsequent to when we started learning about all of the complexes there that were pretty close to each other, and we got the FAST team that night, we pulled up pictures, and as I remember, somebody explained to me here is what we have.

Q It was that night?

A I think it was that night or that week, because that week

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

is just a blur.

Q Sure. But it wasn't before the attack?

A It wasn't before the attack, no.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Now, on the day of the attacks, before you learned that there was an attack that night --

A Right.

Q -- were you aware of any specific or general threats to U.S. interests in the region; AFRICOM AOR?

A Oh, yes. I mean, we had P3s and Predators flying out of Sigonella, Italy. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Okay.

A And we have planes going up at least every other day, as I recall, P3s usually, but Predators as well, because I think it was that night of we had a Predator that was diverted. Shortly before I got into the command center, one of my smart staffers diverted that predator to the Benghazi area.

Q Okay.

A So writ large, yes, we were trying to get our heads around the -- what were historically smuggling routes, and the terrorist networks are using those routes to this day to siphon or move about people, money, and drugs.

Q And Libya was part of that?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A It was.

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

Q Excuse me, just for clarity of the record, you said there were both Predators and P3s available to the Department --

A Yes.

Q -- in that period of time. And do you have a recollection of where the P3s were based?

A Yes, sir. They were out of I want to say Sigonella. They might have been out of Spain, because sometimes we move them back and forth for whatever reason. I -- so I think it was Sigonella or maybe --

Q Right. And how about the Predators?

A They were out of Sigonella as well.

Q And do you have recollection that -- do you have recollection that Predators were ever armed?

A No, sir.

Q Never?

A Never, no.

Q Thank you.

[REDACTED]

ARI [REDACTED]. Thank you.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q And I know Egypt is not strictly in your area of responsibility of AFRICOM; however, it is sharing a border with Libya.

A Right.

Q Were you aware of the potential for unrest in Cairo prior

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

to the protest that took place there in Egypt on 11 September?

A I was. Craig Faller is a J3 at CENTCOM, and we would discuss those kind of things and how they might cascade, which they did.

Q Okay.

A I mean, it's all about indicators and warnings, and to this day it's even become more and more. But it was that week, and a large part of the indicators, warnings revolve around Friday prayers, and that's what time the -- the worst scenario happened that Friday after 9/11.

Q And did -- so you were aware of the potential for unrest in Egypt, discussed it with your counterpart at CENTCOM. Did either AFRICOM or, to your knowledge, did CENTCOM take any particular steps to increase readiness in anticipation of the potential for that specific incident of unrest?

A I don't recall. They have their own FAST teams, and we had, as I learned that week, had one Navy ready for AFRICOM, but there were two in the European Command. One was always kept ready for us. So, yeah, we learned a lot about things like that that week.

Q Yeah. And we'll talk more about the FAST later, but just since you brought it up, what's your understanding of the primary mission or the role of a FAST team with respect to this kind of unrest that you were observing?

A Provide security to an embassy or a government facility.

Q Is it fair to say that the FAST team, when they go into a region or location, they are there to secure the perimeter of a U.S.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

facility?

A That is correct.

Q Not to move to the streets or engage?

A That is fair. How you put it the first time. No, they're not going to be moving through the streets. They are going to go to an objective area and secure that objective area.

Q Okay. So, when did you -- walk through the night, the night of the attack in Benghazi. When did you first learn that there had been an attack?

A I had been in bed about 10 minutes when I got a phone call from my JOC. It was a little after 9:30, and I have this -- I call it the man cave in the basement of my house, and it's got a secure telephone, it's got a secure Tandberg. And I live on base, by the way. It's an 8-minute walk from my house to the office, and General Ham lived across the street. Admiral Leidig lived two houses down.

So I got up, and usually it's preceded by a phone call, and it's a need to talk to you secure, so I'd run down to my basement. But this phone call said, hey, we're hearing from our DAT in Tripoli that there is some people under attack. So, I ran down to the basement and heard that there was an attack in Benghazi. I think it was the first phone call where they said that two people are missing, and one of them is the Ambassador.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Did they ever characterize it as anything other than attack to you in those early phone calls?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A No. They said they're under attack, is how I recall it. I immediately Tandberged the African liaison office of -- General Ham's office in the African liaison office in the Pentagon, and I got him right away and said, hey, boss, here's what's going on. They're under attack. The Ambassador is missing.

He was about to go to a meeting with -- to meet with the chairman, and I said, more to follow, and that was it. It was a very quick first report, here's what I know. And when I say first report, that's -- the first report is never right, as you find out when you're the captain of a ship and somebody reports a flooding or fire. So, I said this is just a first report, but we can't find the Ambassador, and there's another person missing.

It might not have been 10 minutes before more details are flowing in. I think the second conversation I had with the JOC within 20 minutes was one dead, Ambassador still missing. I called that back to General Ham. I then woke up [REDACTED] Leidig and told him the same, and we both agreed we need to set up what's called the FPOC, F-P-O-C, Focal Point Operation Center. It's an alternate operations center, separate from the normal joint ops center, and it's at a higher classification level. We only set it up for special events. So Vice Admiral Leidig and I both agreed we need to go in and call people in and set up the FPOC. We did that.

AA1 BY [REDACTED]:

Q So your first two calls, you were in your quarters?

A They were. The first two calls were Tandbergs to General

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Ham, who is here in D.C., and between about 9:40 and maybe 10:10 is when I spoke to him, and then I'm kissing my wife goodbye and saying, this is bad, see you, I don't know when I'll see you. So, I gathered -- jumped in my uniform and ran to the office.

By 11:00 I think we had the FPOC stood up. People were trickling in. But in the FPOC, which is like a U-shaped set of tables all with either a Tandberg where General Ham would sit, or Vice Admiral Leidig in this case, red switch phones, a couple scattered about. Him and I had direct access to the Joint Staff right there and General Ham with Tandbergs throughout the room. People were coming in from all the J codes and some of the other inner agency folks or people we thought should be there like our legal folks and political advisors.

So, by about 11 o'clock, I know Admiral Leidig and I were in place, and then against the wall you have the normal info displays, CNN, Predator feed was there, Predator feed. So, we have the Predator over the top with providing some feed. But to the untrained eye -- and I'm not trained to watch Predator feed and it's night out. I couldn't tell you, I couldn't make out really what we were looking at other than if you see cars moving about, you can see that. So that was probably the next hour and a half is a blur just setting up the FPOC, and all through that evening we were in contact with General Ham just with updates.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Now, were you primarily communicating with General Ham, or were there others who were in contact with him over that period of time?

A I probably was, for the most part, but Admiral Leidig was

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

also as well, and -- but Leidig and I were like this. We're sitting next to each other all night long. And the Tandberg -- and the red switch was right here, and the Tandberg was like against that wall, which was no further than the end of this table. So General Ham would preferably call in by Tandberg, but I think he might have done it by red switch as well. So I remember talking to General Ham or listening to conversations between him and Leidig three or four times between that and 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning.

02 BY [REDACTED]:

Q And were you getting any information from other -- you mentioned the Predator feed. Any other U.S. military channels; were you getting information from Washington, for example, other than General Ham, of course?

A The Joint Staff would feed back what they were hearing. A lot of this was coming through open-source, though. In fact, the first indication that we received that we might have a dead Ambassador on our hands was a Twitter, and our J2 had picked it up, and it was just a picture with somebody having a body thrown over their shoulder, but there was clearly blond hair that it was feasible it could have been the Ambassador.

Q Yeah.

A And I remember this being between I want to say 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. That was the first indicator, but it was -- you could not see any of his face. It was just blond hair --

Q Sure.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A -- over somebody's shoulder.

Q Yeah.

A So open source was probably our first indicator, and I don't recall our NSA or our J2 types chiming in with any SIGINT that they received. So -- I'm sorry, S-I-G-I-N-T stands for signals intelligence.

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

Q And you mentioned the DAT, the defense attache, when --

A Good point. The DAT was probably our primary node for -- with the embassy, and I remember we had back in this corner here a J5 rep talking to him, because DATs are owned by the J5 in Africa Command throughout the continent, and so they would be on a first-name basis. So I remember our J5 rep was talking to the DAT near continuously through the evening, and he was the one who had direct contacts with the people in Benghazi.

Q So the Predator feed was on the screen?

A Right.

Q Your J5 was in contact with the DAT.

A Your DAT was in Tripoli, by the way.

Q Understood.

You were getting some things from the Joint Staff in Washington?

A Right.

Q What were the other inputs into the FPOC?

A The CNN feeds or people who were watching feeds online. I remember walking by somebody's terminal and seeing a Fox News feed on

[REDACTED]

his computer or her computer.

I remember some conversations with SOCAF, but I don't -- we didn't have a direct feed in the FPOC that I recall. I don't even recall talking to Admiral Losey that evening, and I've known Brian a while. And so I just remember basically we were hanging on the DAT and open source.

Q And how about there was Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] who ran the SST?

A Right.

Q Did you hear from him? Do you have any recollection hearing from him?

A I don't. I didn't recognize -- know about that name until the investigation was much later on. So I was not very -- I did not have granularity on specific personalities of the SST. To me, it was just a unit out there.

Q But regardless of the personalities, you don't recall hearing directly from someone representing that entity in the FPOC?

A I don't. I might have heard like from the DAT. The DAT says the SST is available or can help. I remember there was a scramble to get people onto an aircraft they were trying to get over there. And then -- and that -- I think that aircraft left sometime shortly after midday, and it was about a 2-hour plane ride from Tripoli to Benghazi.

Q And how about the people that were on that airplane? There were two uniformed individuals on that airplane. Did you have any feedback? Did you receive any information from them?

A I recall, I think there were seven people on the airplane.

[REDACTED]

Four of them were security-type people, and I just -- and having read some of the accounts, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I think at least two of them, so -- and I think two more folks who jumped in from the embassy who might have been part of the SST.

Q But you weren't receiving, to your recollection, reports from them or feedback from them in the FPOC?

A No, no, we weren't. I mean, it was all coming through the database saying they were going to do this, and we said, great idea.

ORA BY [REDACTED]:

Q Just to be clear, were -- was the FPOC in contact with any personnel on the ground in Benghazi?

A No.

Q Okay. And then other than the --

A Not at all.

Q Other than the DAT and Colonel [REDACTED] --

A Right.

Q -- was the FPOC in communication with any other personnel on the ground in Tripoli, to your recollection?

A The answer is no, but I think our J5 folks might have been with some of their folks that they would normally talk to in the embassy.

Q Okay.

A But I think it was probably all DAT.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q What about Colonel [REDACTED] do you know if any of your staff was in contact with him that night?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A I do not.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q So we talked earlier about the role of the J3 in the combatant command. We talked about crisis scenarios and option preparation. As a J3 during this crisis scenario, what options were you preparing for General Ham or Vice Admiral Leidig to respond specifically to the Benghazi? What was going on in Benghazi?

A I was looking at Admiral Leidig for a way ahead, because he'd been there almost 2-1/2 years.

Q Yes.

A An amazingly sharp man. He had the corporate knowledge. But we did have discussions on, gosh, what can we do here, or what needs to be done, but we came to the conclusion quickly that this was an exfiltration mission. We need to get -- we need to find the Ambassador and get everybody else out, out of there. We knew we had people injured, I don't recall how many, but we started working with Air Force Africa to get -- consider getting a medical aircraft down there, which we eventually did. So it was more exfiltration, how to take care of the remains and the wounded. When I say "remains," that would be the folks that were killed.

Q Sure.

With respect to -- we talked about the FAST team and that there was a FAST team that was available to AFRICOM.

A Right.

Q How was FAST incorporated into the options that you were

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

preparing for the command for responding to Benghazi?

A Yeah. For responding to Benghazi, it probably wasn't considered, although I don't recall, but I know we started thinking this could happen at the embassy in Tripoli; we need to start thinking about getting a FAST team down there. So, I'm sure that was part of the discussion, but I'm vague on it because it's a year and a half later.

Q Sure. No, I understand.

So -- but just to be clear then, so to your recollection, there was not really an option to send FAST to Benghazi, it was more to send it to Tripoli, to the embassy; is that fair?

A I don't know if that's fair. I just don't recall.

Q Okay. Well, given -- we talked a little bit about the mission of FAST, and what its capabilities are, and what its capabilities aren't, and given the, you know, sort of an evacuation, would there have been an option -- you know, looking at it from an operations perspective, would there have been a plausible option for FAST or a role for them to play in Benghazi given the --

A As I understand FAST teams, they are really for point defense. You take a point, you surround the perimeter, and you keep intruders away, bad folks away, and that would be perfect for protection of an embassy. But I didn't -- I don't see one now where we can use that to get into Benghazi because we didn't know the terrain, it was dark, we had no sources on the ground that could tell us, what do you want us to do.

You don't send people in blindly without a mission, and we didn't

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

know enough about Benghazi to really consider what are we going to do. But I know we threw it up on the table and said, well, what are we going to do here? We did have a discussion about attack aircraft, and we made some phone calls on that, but quickly came to the conclusion that was not feasible. And you have to remember also that we had no idea a second attack was coming. The way you're questioning me right now is we were right around the midnight timeframe, okay, so we're not even close to the 4 a.m. firefight.

Q Sure. And that's a good point. I mean, one of the things that we've been trying to do in this investigation is to separate ex post facto understanding.

A Right.

Q Things that we're aware of that ultimately happened in hindsight vice --

A Correct.

Q -- things that were known to people like yourself who were considering what options were available or not available, given the information available to you at the time. So that's a good point that you made.

So just a couple more questions about the FAST. So then did you -- I take it you didn't request any flight clearances for a FAST to come and go into Benghazi; is that fair to say, to your recollection?

A I think that's fair to say. I don't recall, but, no, I don't think we did.

Q Yeah.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A But --

Q Maybe the first question --

A I don't think that was, you know -- that's a detail.

Q Yeah.

A If we decided to do it, we would have made that happen, I'm sure, somehow, but -- or we would have just done it if we believed there was a reason to get them in there.

Q But typically you would want to get the flight clearances; is that fair to --

A Right.

Q It's our understanding anyway?

A I mean, and if you consider Libya a sovereign country, you'd want their permission.

Q Okay.

A They're not that sovereign.

Q If they were to -- if FAST were to have been considered for Benghazi for some reason, I mean, what are the factors you'd have to consider? Additional flight clearances. Would you have to consider how to get them from the airport to wherever they were trying to go and that sort of thing?

A This is all -- we are all speculating here now, but you want to know where are they going to land, what's the ingress and egress route, and is it secure.

Q If I could --

A What are the hazards, what are the threats?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Okay.

A But this is all 20/20.

Q Yeah. Now, with respect to the -- let's talk about some other forces that were activated on that night.

A Sure.

Q Our understanding is that at some point the EUCOM Commanders In-Extremis Forces were activated for response. When did you become aware of the EUCOM CIF activation?

(to be ours)

A Was it EUCOM's, or was it about the VR's, but it was EUCOM's at the time?

Q I believe it was EUCOM.

A I remember a CIF that was coming our way 1 October.

Q Yeah.

A And it was in Croatia. And before I knew it, I didn't give the order, but it was then -- before I knew it, it was in Sicily.

Q Yeah.

A And because it was in an exercise in Croatia, and at that time some orders were made at the General Ham and Secretary Panetta level that had got things moving to Sicily and quickly.

Q Yeah.

AR1 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Where is EUCOM CIF? Do you have recollection -- do you have dim recollection or --

A Well, I knew it was coming our way 1 October, but without the enablers, it was a lift that --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Right.

A -- the logistics pieces that you really need to have an effective CIF.

Q Right.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q So, but on the night of the attack, was -- were you made aware that the EUCOM CIF had been activated, and was it then subsequently transferred over to AFRICOM's operation control to respond?

A I think I'm having trouble with the word "activated." It was in an exercise.

Q Yeah.

A So, it was available, and I think it was immediately, and then probably once General Ham and Secretary Panetta or Joint Staff realized there was a CIF in an exercise in Croatia, they just said, send it to Sicily now.

Q Okay.

A So that was done transparent to me.

Q I'm sorry, when you say "transparent" --

A Transparent meaning those were orders that were executed. I didn't even know about them.

Q Oh, Okay.

A Other than after the fact.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q And you and your team that were sitting in the room at this time throwing up options about fighter aircraft or the FAST, who was

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the final decisionmaking authority in the room? Was there any heated debate about any of these topics where someone had to make a decision on --

A There were no heated debates that evening. There were discussions, and Vice Admiral Leidig would take what we considered to General Ham, and I remember at some point General Ham said with regard to getting attack aircraft, that we considered it and then said, I don't see a need for this.

Q So that decision went all the way up to General Ham who --

A It did.

Q -- ultimately decided against it.

A I recall a Tandberg where this was discussed, and we said just said no. I think -- I think now that was before 4 o'clock, before the second attack, kind of what we discussed what do we need to do here, so -- and then I remember N Plus 16 was given us by the Air Force folks, which means really you're not going to get anything there within 24 hours.

AR1 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Sorry, you mean for the FAST moving attack?

A That's correct, out of Aviano.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q And just to help you out for the purposes of the transcript, the second attack, you mean the mortar attack on the --

A Right.

Q So that 0515. No one expects you to remember that 20 months

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

later. I just wanted to help you out with that.

A All right. Yeah.

Q So with respect to the EUCOM CIF, and you may have answered this already in talking about how it sort of activated --

A Right.

Q -- another chain away from the AFRICOM chain. As a J3 and in preparing options again, what options, if any, did you prepare, consider preparing, employing the EUCOM CIF, this CIF that you've been discussing, to respond to Benghazi?

A I don't recall any.

Q Okay.

A I just don't recall. I remember having a discussion, but I -- you know, before the 5:15 attack, we had those discussions, but we also thought that this is -- there was a lull in activity where we're just trying to find the Ambassador.

Q Yeah.

A And there was nothing else kinetic happening, and also, you know, we've got a plane flying over to Benghazi. There is 2 hours of dead time waiting for them to get over there, and then I remember them getting over there, and then they couldn't leave the airport for a long time until I think some militia folks finally showed up and provided some help.

Q And then with respect again to the CIF, we have the benefit -- I can put it in front of you if you want to see it. It is a timeline that DOD put out, and they talked about Secretary Panetta

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

giving verbal orders to activate the CIF --

A Okay.

Q -- sometime between midnight and 0200 the morning of the 12th, your time.

A Okay.

Q Stuttgart time, just to help you with that.

A Okay.

Q And then again, according to that same timeline then, so they are ordered to prepare to deploy as late as 0200, sometime between midnight and 0200, but it wasn't -- it wasn't until 1957 on the 12th that that unit, the CIF, reached its intermediate staging area, which I think you said was in Sicily?

A Sigonella.

Q Yeah, in Sigonella.

Were you aware at the time of how long it would be for the CIF to deploy when you were considering how to respond in Benghazi on the night of?

A No. Frankly, I didn't know enough about what the CIF did yet, and one of the hazards of throwing a Navy guy into an Army-centric command. I learned quickly, though.

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

Q In fact, I understand you to say you did not know the CIF was in Croatia on a training mission until --

A 'Til that evening.

Q -- that evening?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Right. And then -- but then I was also aware enough of the CIF that wasn't ours yet. That's why we treat it like a EUCOM force.

Q Sure.

A And I'm sure I had conversations with EUCOM that night, I just can't recall, but in the midst of our brainstorming, we did talk to EUCOM about what's available, as we did through the rest of the week, because by Friday we used an awful lot of EUCOM forces to get to Khartoum and Tunis and Tripoli.

ARI [REDACTED] Sure.

BRA BY [REDACTED]:

Q And actually you made a good point about Khartoum and Tunis. Really, it's the case, it seems, that there were a lot of -- at lot of instability, a lot of concerns throughout the region; is that --

A By that Friday, the indicators and warnings were ringing like a loud bell. I mean, the Friday prayers folks were calling for violence, and I was in contact with Craig Faller, the J3 at CENTCOM. And I'm a little clearer on Friday and Saturday, I think, because I got a night's sleep in between Tuesday night and then Friday. But there were protests at the Tunisian consulate, which was damaged very much, by the way, Tunisia. I think there was some protests in Tripoli. It wasn't that bad, though. And then we had damage and protests in Khartoum, Sudan. I remember we got a FAST team out of Souda Bay that was heading to Sudan and refueled in Egypt, and then it was held at the border of Egypt and Sudan because we could never get country clearance from the Sudanese Government.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The next day the Sudanese Government took care of business and protected our embassy, but that didn't do us much good on Friday, as I recall. Tunisia, we got a FAST team in there quickly. I think that was the one out of Rota. And then we had -- I remember we got CENTCOM forces into Tripoli as well.

Friday -- Friday and Saturday both were busy days for protecting our embassies, and I know Cairo was under similar strain. And I don't recall what CENTCOM did for that, but CENTCOM had issues with Cairo and, I think, in Bahrain, and they had their own FAST team that was in Bahrain, and that's what protected them, Bahrain assets, U.S. facilities.

Q And then talking about the other forces that were activated at night on -- the morning of the 12th, early morning of the 12th of September.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Yeah.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Okay.

A And it stayed there for about a month, as I recall.

Q So, sort of separating that discussion, what I'm going to ask you, the force you're referring to, which is a force deployed from the United States, a Special Operations Force from the United States,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

when did you become aware that that had been activated?

A Sometime that night.

Q Okay. So in the dawn hours of -- early hours of 12th
September?

A That's correct.

[REDACTED]

[10:58 a.m.]

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q And then in your role as a J-3, were there any options that you were preparing for your command that would have presumably utilized that force to respond particularly to the attack in Benghazi?

A I don't recall that evening, no.

Q Okay.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Was the idea then to begin with the EUCOM CIF activation and the Special Operations Force coming from the United States; was the idea to maximize the options you were going to have --

A It was.

Q -- over the course of the next day, 2 days, 3 days?

A Correct. And being naval guys, we look where is the nearest carrier at, but I knew there were none in the Med at that time. It is not like the old days when you have 1-0 presence in the Med, but it is more like .2 now. And it is a transitting carrier presence, or armed for that matter. So I remember knowing instinctively that there was little naval in the Med that we could use that for anything.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q And again, the timeline that was released by the Department of Defense, it says on there that at 0230 your time --

A Right.

Q -- Stuttgart, there was a conference call conducted by the National Military Command Center with representatives from AFRICOM, EUCOM, CENTCOM, TRANSCOM, SOCOM and foreign services. Were you on that call, do you recall, for AFRICOM?

A You know, I don't recall that. Admiral Leidig might have been --

Q Sure.

A -- but I remember being with him all night, so that might have been like a red switch call, and that would have been -- I would have heard his end, but not the other end. I don't recall any SVTs going on.

Q Sure.

A Secure video teleconferences.

Q And then separating response options for what was going on in Benghazi specifically, as a J-3 what options were you involved in preparing for your command to respond to events outside of Libya? Was that a significant part of what you were looking at that night, given the instability in the region?

A No, it was -- we were -- it was soda straw in Benghazi, Libya.

Q Okay.

A Friday it was big picture, but that night it was -- you know, it was all about the Ambassador.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Yeah, okay.

And then again referring back to this timeline from DOD, it talks about AFRICOM ordering a C-17 based in Germany to prepare to deploy to Libya to evacuate the Americans?

A Right.

Q And you alluded to this earlier?

A Yes.

Q So the timeline talks about that preparation being ordered at 6:05 in the morning on 12 September. I was wondering why that time? Was it discussed earlier given the -- getting an aircraft in to evacuate? It just seems a bit --

A Yeah, and I'm going to be vague here because I don't recall specifically, but I remember having conversations on we need to get something down there to pick up survivors and medical, an air evacuation, meaning full medical treatment facility on board that aircraft. And I think the Air Force has three or four of these aircraft globally that are rigged for that.

Q Yes.

A And one of them -- and I think that we used one of them for that.

Q Yes.

A And I remember the Pred feed clearly for that. You can see that when it lands in broad daylight. But at 6:05, it was probably discussed long before that, but that was probably when somebody logged it. So I don't see 6:05 as significant in any way.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Okay.

A Because it was always in our minds to get something down there to pick people up and to get doctors down there.

Q And then also, just with respect to that C-17, the timeline -- the timeline talks about that aircraft not departing Germany until 1415, which is some hours later. Do you recall any discussion about that?

A Right.

Q Did it seem unusual that it took that long?

A Let me tell you what I did that day. About 10 o'clock that morning, Leidig told me go home, get some sleep, come back and relieve me at 6 o'clock that night, which I did. So I don't know what happened during those 8 hours that I was gone.

Q Fair enough.

A But I do recall before I left there was a lot of discussion about getting that air evacuation aircraft down there.

OR2 [REDACTED]. We are running a little short on our -- we have got 5 minutes left. Do you guys have anything else you want to address before we --

Admiral Landolt. I'm okay. I don't feel a need to break or anything.

OR2 [REDACTED]. We have to switch sides.

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

Q In the meeting of the response options, was the AC-130 ever mentioned or discussed?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Never.

Q Never.

A I heard about that in open source months later. I'm remembering thinking, how -- an AC-130 in an urban environment, well, it's just -- you know, that made no sense to me. Never discussed, and I heard about it, I think, months later in a New York Times article or something like that. So --

AR1 [REDACTED]. Okay. Thank you.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Just one more thing. You mentioned that the reporting you were getting sort of during the early hours of this, there was some open source coming in from CNN, from FOX, from Twitter. Do you believe the information coming in provided a clearer picture, or do you believe it presented information that may have been contrary to what was happening on the ground?

A I recall it not providing very much other than the U.S. consulate facility is under attack, and that's about it.

Q Okay. So there was no fog in the information that it was a protest, or just any information that may have indicated it was something other than an attack coming in via open source?

A I remember watching a CNN feed, and it was vague.

Q Okay.

A They knew something was going on, that our U.S. facility was under attack. I don't even know if they knew the Ambassador was missing. I don't recall that. I knew -- I knew he was gone from the first phone

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

call -- "gone" meaning missing, but -- and then the next phone call, as I said, we knew the communicator was dead, but as long as the Ambassador was missing, the longer he is missing, the more, you know, I got that feeling in my stomach that this is not going to end well.

AR2 [REDACTED] Okay.

OR2 [REDACTED] Okay, well, we are about at the limit of 1 hour, so we will go off the record.

[Discussion off of the record.]

DD1 [REDACTED] We will go back on the record. The time is 11:19.

EXAMINATION

DD1 BY [REDACTED]

Q Admiral Landolt, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you both for your service and for speaking with us today. My name is [REDACTED]. I'm with the minority staff of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and I'm joined here by my colleague [REDACTED], also with the Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

During our discussion this hour, my colleagues and I would like to ask you a series of questions following up on the September 2012 attacks in Benghazi. Some of our questions may revisit topics previously discussed, I'm sure, during the last hour. Our intent in asking our questions is to develop as complete and accurate a record as possible. And we can only begin to appreciate how challenging the circumstances were for you and your colleagues on the night of the attacks.

Admiral, I would like to begin by just discussing real broadly your

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

role as Director of Operations of cyber and J-3 --

A Right.

Q -- and specifically, your area of responsibility, that being most of the African Continent. Can you just maybe help us understand or discuss for us some of the challenges that you faced in carrying out your mission in Africa given the challenges in the geography, the distance and the size of the continent?

A You are talking Africa writ large --

Q Yes.

A -- and not just Libya and Benghazi. But when you've got a continent the size of 3-1/2 United States that are inside of it, that is poor in governance and even poorer in infrastructure, you can imagine the logistics, pitfalls, and challenges you have in accomplishing any mission down there.

What we try to do is have -- our philosophy is make as big an impact with as small a footprint as possible. On any given day, you might have 6,000 people in the entire continent. Six thousand sounds like a lot of people, but it really isn't. And when you consider that some of those 6,000 might be 300 on a ship off the coast, or a submarine that might be assigned to us, that will take 1,000 off the top right there. But when you've got the African Continent and so many small teams of 20 to 30, many of those Special Forces, and you, again, are trying to make as big an impact with as small a footprint as possible. Of those 6,000, that would be the 800 to 1,000 that are in Djibouti as well, in the Horn of Africa -- JTF Horn of Africa.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So the challenges are immense, and we are the newest combatant command with probably the least assigned forces. SOUTHCOM is probably in the same position. But we don't have many assigned forces at our disposal, although we have gotten more since 9/11 of 2012. So the challenges are the tyranny of distance continentwise and the lack of infrastructure on that continent.

Q Thank you. That is very helpful.

I think one of the things that we heard is some of the difficulties in executing a noncombatant evacuation even in best of circumstances.

A Right.

Q We have seen some of those instances in the past, whether it is Operation Eastern Exit or otherwise.

Could you maybe discuss some of those challenges specifically as it relates to evacuating personnel from --

A Well, let's talk about The New Normal then, because one of the things I'm proudest of is what we did post-9/11 when the New Normal ex order came out. That New Normal ex order is an execution order given -- signed off by the Secretary of Defense, and this was a global execution order, and this execution order identified 20 -- let's see, either 24 or 26 high-threat embassies around the globe, 14 of which were on the African Continent.

We had to come up with what were called level 1 CONOPS, Concept of Operations, to evacuate embassies in the event of them being under attack or duress. When you have got embassies that are nowhere near a coastline, this becomes challenging. With the help of the U.S. Army

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

and the Marine Corps that helped identify forces that were made available to us within the past year to provide evacuating -- NEO, Noncombatant Evacuation Operations, or continuancy response forces that we have used quite a bit, particularly of late. The Marine Air-Ground Task Force, or MAGTF, Special MAGTF as it is called, is now assigned out of Moron, Spain. It has been deployed to Sigonella more than once, as recently as 9/11 of this year, to -- as preemptive in case something were to happen on the continent.

Since I've left the job, I understand it's deployed to Djibouti in the Horn of Africa to assist with forces under duress in Sudan and Central African Republic, I think. Out in Djibouti, the Army came up with a regional quick reaction force that's out of Adderson that was tailored out of some units they had out there and also brought in from the States, and the Horn of Africa Commander has used them in preparatory standby in case events unfolded that we might need them in the Eastern African area.

So we do have now forces in place that can react more quickly than we did previous to 9/11 of 2012, but the fact that the continent is still so huge makes getting to anyplace in Central to Southern Africa in a timely manner still very much a challenge. I think we have diminished risk in the Northwest African area, as well as in the East African area, those six countries out there, but in Central and Southern Africa, it's still very much a challenge because of the tyranny of distance.

Q Thank you.

During the last hour, we had a brief discussion over the Site

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Security Team and the mission into which that evolved, the type of security assistance for our Libyan military partners.

A Right.

Q Regarding those programs, and you referred specifically to the 1206, but if we could talk about 1206, 1207, or 1208 -- regarding those programs --

A Right.

Q -- did they generally develop or evolve as you expected or as the military has experienced in other locations? In other words, is there anything improper about the planning or the development of those programs in Libya?

A I don't think there is anything improper about the planning or development. It's the execution, and you have got to have a willing partner, an able partner, and I don't think Libya is there yet.

Q Okay. But are you aware of whether personnel on the ground were engaged in assessments of Libyan Special Forces units in order to determine their readiness or their state of readiness?

A I am aware of that. They have done those assessments.

Q Okay.

A They have tried to vet a number of people. I recall somewhere between 75 and 125 folks who were vetted by the SOCAF folks down there. And I know there's a lot of discussion ongoing, and that wasn't really in my lane, but the general purpose force for the Libyans that we were trying to help develop along with the Brits and the Italians is still ongoing.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q And just to clarify, when you say we didn't engage in any Special Forces operations --

A Yes.

Q -- you are referring to the night of the attack, just you specifically and Admiral Leidig within AFRICOM; is that correct?

A That's correct.

Q And were your communications with the senior Defense official, with the DAT in Tripoli, were those routed through the FPOC or through the JOC?

A Through the FPOC.

Q Through the FPOC, okay.

A The person talking to them would have been as far away from me as her.

Q Just to be clear, it was -- I think you stated earlier it was the J-5, the representative from the J-5 who was in contact?

A That's right.

Q Okay. You had mentioned during the last hour that there was some discussion about whether to utilize or deploy attack or fighter aircraft on the night of the attack?

A Right.

Q And you mentioned that there was an option that was considered, but then it was quickly dismissed. And I was just wondering if you could help us, walk us through that discussion, and then maybe also discuss what sort of factors would have been important in that

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

decision.

A I think the -- what would have led to that kind of usage was were there Americans in imminent danger, and did we have that capability at hand? And I think there was a lot of kind of war-gaming in our minds in our discussions like under what circumstances would we use it if we had it.

And I recall Admiral Leidig later on in the week said he had a conversation with General Ham on that; that, yeah, we probably would have used it if we had had it, but we -- there was no conceivable way we would get it that night.

Q Okay. And just to be clear, "it" here is the use of attack aircraft?

A Right. Well, you know, F-16s, which were available in Aviano. When I say available, I mean they were present in Aviano. They were not available.

Q Okay. And I think in the discussion last hour, you had also mentioned that you had some sort of awareness of what their response time might be?

A N+16, which means, you know, 16 before they're off the ground, and then you've still got, I don't know, 2- to 3-hour flight time, and then for what mission we did not know. You know, you needed to refuel them. You needed to get the pilots prepped. You needed to get them mission ready and brief a mission. You needed to get ammo put onboard. So -- and all of that was unknown. The mission was unknown.

Q Was there -- is it fair to say that there was a general

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

awareness within AFRICOM of that response time for those aircraft at Aviano?

A There was. We made the phone calls. I remember that night we got -- that's where our N+16 sticks in my mind, because we asked that question.

BY [REDACTED]: 002

Q Is this -- you know, for AFRICOM, when you first arrived that night, can you just generically walk us through? You know, you guys walk in, there are several other personnel in there, and I gather you are exploring all options?

A Right.

Q And can you just sort of explain to us sort of how that works? You know, do you have, you know, tasks boards up essentially laying out what the possibilities are? Are you in constant conversation with -- you know, can we do this, can we do this, can we do this? You know, sort of what happened that night.

A The JOC was at the other end of the base, by the way, the Joint Ops Center, in like a cement cinderblock building. The FPOC was in the lower level of the office building that my office was in, at -- it was probably several hundred yards from the JOC.

So Admiral Leidig and I went straight to the FPOC. We told the JOC to start calling people in for the FPOC. And you normally stand up the FPOC when you know you have a pending Special Forces mission about to be executed. So people were coming in. I remember getting in about quarter to 11:00, and a couple of folks were there setting up, turning

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

on screens for computers, and we had the Pred feed up. We had, you know, CNN up. And Admiral Leidig and I would sit down immediately and started brainstorming; you know, where are we, what do we know? And it was shortly after -- before midnight, I think, when we spoke to General Ham again on a Tandberg and told him the FPOC is standing up, and here is who we have here, and this is what we know, and that kind of went on through the evening.

So I'd say you have got conversations stopping and starting throughout that -- 11 o'clock that night until 10:00 in the morning when I left between -- amongst ourselves, and with folks on the Joint Staff, and General Ham as well.

Q And was it your sense that there was a serious degree of urgency from the minute you walked in?

A Yes.

Q And that all options were being looked at, were being explored?

[REDACTED]

Q What does that signal send to you?

A That tells me that we are looking at a possible hostage of an ambassador situation. That is what was going through our mind that night, and that's what I meant earlier when I said 1979. I thought that we were looking at a hostage crisis maybe, and that was before we knew we had two more dead people.

Q So to sum up, if there was a tool out there, you felt like

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

that you guys had it on your radar screen and were assessing whether or not you could use it, and then also sort of what the N-plus factor would be to determine whether or not you, in fact, could use it in that particular situation?

A I mean, what was going through our mind was what's available to us. You know, again, AFRICOM doesn't have many forces assigned to it. At that time we did not anyway. And we also knew we didn't have an aircraft carrier in the Med. We didn't have an ARG, Amphibious Ready Group, in the Med -- Mediterranean, so what did we have? And we started talking with our components, and Leidig and I both knew what was available from the Navy side, but the Air Force, we started asking questions of them what might they have.

We knew the CIF was coming back. When I say "coming back," coming to Sigonella. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q I will ask one final question in this area.

A Yeah.

Q You're also getting information fed to you from the field about what the evolving situation looks like. Can you just sort of explain sort of how you meshed those two things together? I'm guessing you would want to have a very good sense of what you have on the ground to figure out what tools would be most appropriate, and so there is sort of an evolution on both ends.

A Well, when you say information from the field, that would

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

have been coming from the DAT, and him telling us what he thinks is going on based on what he is hearing from his contacts back in Benghazi.

And again, this is a year and a half later, and I remember it all being very foglike, you know. We knew that these militias were supposed to be helping our folks out. At some point in the evening I recall they bugged out on us, and that was very frustrating.

I remember being very frustrated that night because there were so -- I felt like there was so little that we could -- there was so much we didn't know, and so when you have got that, it is hard to develop a mission when you don't know the facts on the ground.

DDI BY [REDACTED]:

Q You mentioned in the last hour that there was a FAST team that had deployed, or attempted to deploy, to Sudan, but they were held up.

A Yeah, that was later in the week.

Q That before they were able to insert, that the Sudanese military or security forces had taken some sort of response. Was that generally the thinking also in Libya was that we need to rely on the -- there was some expectation that there should be a local response, at least -- you know, this isn't necessary the military's thinking, but maybe some other folks?

A I think I have heard former ambassadors talk about how there are host nation responsibilities to protecting our embassies, and that should be a given, but it isn't. Say what you will about the Sudanese Government, but they -- he has a strong arm, and whether or not he decides

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

to use that strong arm is their call. That Friday they didn't do it; the Saturday they did. And for whatever reasons, Tripoli is ungoverned and largely remains so, so that we couldn't rely on the Libyan Government to do much for us, and we still can't today.

Q You had mentioned during the last hour that in your discussions with Admiral Leidig, again, somewhat quickly, that you had both arrived at this conclusion that the mission wasn't an exfiltration. I was wondering if you could walk us through some of those discussions and how you arrived at that conclusion.

A Right. When I -- the first phone call, as you know, the Ambassador is missing -- two people are missing. Next phone call, one dead, Ambassador still missing. And that was how it remained until the second firefight. So it would have been, okay, two scenarios playing. What if we don't find the Ambassador, and what if we do?

So we went down both roads, and I guess the same thing happened in Washington, but, again, I'm guessing. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I don't recall if we knew how many others were injured at any particular time, but I think I recall we did know there were injuries, people injured, and, hence, the continued press for the C-17 with the medical attachment on board.

So I think those are the two scenarios going through our mind was really focused on the Ambassador, and then, you know, at the exfiltration of the injured. And we didn't feel there was -- because of so little intelligence on the ground, that we were going to take any kind of offensive operations here.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q I'm sorry, just to return to the discussion about the attack aircraft. You mentioned at the end of the last hour that after the fact you had considered the option of the use of the AC-130 gunship?

A No, never.

Q But in looking back on it now, you had determined that that would have been the wrong tool given the urban environment?

A Right.

Q I think you -- not to put any words in your mouth -- you said it made no sense to you. Could you just explain for us?

A This is months later, you know, when I heard about it, and part of the conspiracy theory network. Somebody said it was traveling through, and we could have called them, but I don't recall that ever being the case. And from the very little I know about AC-130s, that is a mass casualty kind of platform, and I just don't see us making any gains politically or military using an AC-130 without the type of intelligence that we would never have achieved in that scenario that night.

Q And just to be clear, on the night of the attacks, were you aware of whether or not there was an AC-130 in the vicinity?

A I was not aware that there was an AC-130. And I will -- you know, I'm smart enough to ask, hey, I need an AC-130. It never popped in my brain that --

002 BY [REDACTED]:

Q You had mentioned that you had some understanding of the events in Egypt prior to Benghazi?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A I seem to recall talking to Craig Faller that week or the week before, because him and I are longtime friends, and we speak periodically just to gossip about the Navy, or just to talk about pending ops where we might have to share assets.

I remember the week before 9/11, I used to have an -- every 2 weeks a meeting with the J-3s of all of our components. And I remember going out to them and telling them, you know, 9/11 is coming up, take due measure of indicators or warnings, and get the word out to your folks that -- you know, that this is a kind of anniversary that Al Qaeda celebrates, and we don't want them to catch us off guard.

And that was, to me, a prudent thing to do, and I had that kind of conversation with him, I recall, and him saying that he was looking at the same kind of thing in IMW on his end. And Egypt came up, but I think Egypt had been brewing anyway. So I recall having a conversation with him about Egypt, Cairo, but other than they were keeping an eyeball on it, kind of vague like that.

001 BY [REDACTED]:

Q What -- when you say it was brewing, what do you -- what was brewing?

A Well, it was still in the post -- in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, and so Egypt is in CENTCOM's AOR. It's part of Africa, but it is the one country that doesn't belong to us, but it is on our seam. And as we found out later on -- I don't know if we found out, but as we planned on later on, there was a point this past year where we had a FAST team that was OPCOM to EUCOM, TACOM to AFRICOM, but it

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

supported CENTCOM, and we moved it over to Souda Bay, Greece, because we were worried about Cairo.

So we had those kind of conversation amongst the J-3s, myself, EUCOM, and CENTCOM because it was the prudent thing to do. You know, in the age of limited assets, you have to share assets.

OP2

BY [REDACTED]

Q You had also talked about that entire week, particularly towards the end, you have protests in Tunis, protests in Khartoum, and protests in Tripoli?

A The Friday after 9/11?

Q Right.

A Right. I believe that's true.

Q Was that a confusing week?

A That was the week where the indicators and warnings were that the J2 folks were telling us that the Friday prayers are not going well, that a lot of the imams were out there spreading messages of hate and do harm to Americans. And that was not just true in those three places, but, as I understand it, in Cairo and in Bahrain as well.

And so the people went out and did harm, and that -- I remember spending a lot of time getting FAST teams into place in those three embassies, trying to get them into those three embassies. And we moved a lot of assets around over to Souda Bay. We had our J-5 folks and State Department folks working to get country clearances into Egypt, by the way, to refuel the aircraft so that they could go into Sudan, but we never got the clearance from Sudan to get that FAST team there. Tunis,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I remember some conversation, it was either in Tunis or Tripoli, over whether or not the FAST team should wear uniforms or not.

So that Friday, Saturday was very much -- and then I also recall that General Ham went up to Ramstein Friday to meet the bodies and talk to some of the survivors from Benghazi. That's right. It was Friday or Saturday when the Ambassador's body came back, and General Ham went to Ramstein to meet him. And then he came back, and I knew he was in headquarters Saturday. So, yeah, that was a very active, activity-filled couple of days, and a lot of it driven by the events on the ground in those three embassies of ours.

OD2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Do you recall what was driving those events? Was there any particular issue?

A Yeah, it was the embassies in Tunis and Khartoum were under attack, and, boy, the damage done in Tunis was significant. The reinforced entry places were all torn apart. And it took months -- let's see, I think I only got that FAST team out there out about 5 or 6 months ago. That Ambassador was hooked on that FAST team like a drug, and, you know, I don't have a FAST team for every country in the continent, but we kept one in Tunis for a very long time, at least a year.

OD1 BY [REDACTED]:

Q You'd mentioned that either you or Admiral Leidig had had a series of discussions or conversations with General Ham on the night of the attacks?

A Right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Was it your sense or your impression that General Ham was being kept fully and timely informed of information as it was being relayed to you?

A It was. He would -- for instance, you know, I called him the first two times from home and then told him we are going to set up the FPOC. And then he would tell me, I have got a meeting with either the Secretary or the chairman in 20 minutes; I'll call you when I am done with that meeting. And so we would stand by and wait for him to call us back. And he would tell us what was said or grew out of that meeting. And then we'd agree to either call him when we had something, or he'd say, okay, I have another meeting to go to, you know, I'll call you when I get back. It was probably more him calling in because of the meetings he was going to back there and touching base with us after he was done with the meetings, but if -- I remember initiating the call the first two times, though. So I would say yes.

Q Okay.

CDQ BY [REDACTED]:

Q He was sharing information with you guys as well as you guys sharing him with him, a cross-exchange?

A Right.

Q And so in some cases, would he have information that you guys had not yet had?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q So presumably somewhere on the main continent with respect to where General Ham and the Secretary of Defense sat, they are receiving information --

A Right.

Q -- that may not have even gotten to your level?

A I think that's possible.

CDR [REDACTED]. Okay.

CDI BY [REDACTED]:

Q This will be our final question, but there have been some public statements about some of the events or discussions, perhaps, in the interagency on the night of the attacks, and we would just like to ask you on the night of the attacks, did you or, to your knowledge, anyone in your command receive any order from then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to stand down?

A Not at all. We did not.

CDI [REDACTED]. Okay. We'll go off the record.

[Discussion off the record.]

[REDACTED]

[12:00 p.m.]

AR1 BY [REDACTED]

Q So, Admiral, just a couple of clarifying questions from me, and then I'm going to hand you over to my colleague to ask some specific questions about the early months when you were in your position.

A Okay.

Q So we talked a little bit on a couple of occasions about the FAST team, or teams plural, and where -- how they were used in the Libya context. And the timeline the Department of Defense has released in connection with the Benghazi attacks, which ^{OR2} [REDACTED] has made reference to on a couple of occasions, indicates that Secretary Panetta, the evening of the attacks, directs, provides verbal authorization for the following actions: One, a fleet antiterrorism security team, FAST platoon, stationed in Rota, Spain, to prepare to deploy to Benghazi; and a second FAST platoon, also stationed in Rota, Spain, to prepare to deploy to the Embassy Tripoli?

A Okay.

Q I think I understood you to say that you don't have contemporaneous recollection of those two specific deployments?

A I don't for Benghazi. I do for Tripoli. But that night, I just don't recall us thinking about putting boots on the ground in Benghazi. You know, a lot of what we do is at the behest of the Embassy itself, and they were asking for our help that night. But, you know,

[REDACTED]

I think we were all in the -- we were all asking each other what can we do. They weren't specific. You know, we knew we needed to find the Ambassador and then get him out. Then again, it gets back to the exfiltration mission that we derived as the primary mission.

So I don't recall offhand trying to get a FAST team into Benghazi. I remember thinking, yeah, it makes sense to get it into Tripoli because of protesting happening in capitals of countries, which is usually where our embassies are.

Q Sure. Okay. And then turning to the F-16s in Aviano. And again, I want to be careful to distinguish the conversations that evening as opposed to conversations maybe in the days afterwards.

A Uh-huh.

Q I think you said that you and Admiral Leidig and maybe General Ham had a discussion about the possibility of dispatching F-16s from Aviano. And did I understand you to say that in those discussions you decided that you could have or would have used the F-16s had we had them available?

A Yeah. It gets back to the N+16. I mean, the N+16 immediately tells me they are not available this evening.

Q So am I to understand then that had calls been made or word came back that F-16s are available, that would have been a tool that you would have considered utilizing that evening?

A Well, sure. And, say, if I had an aircraft carrier off the coast or in the Med, you know, that would have been in the mix. I'm almost positive that Admiral Leidig talked to Lieutenant General

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Franklin, who is Air Force Africa commander, and once we heard N+16, you know, that's not helpful. And then I think Admiral Leidig had a conversation with General Ham saying, you want us to press and go ahead and get the F-16s, and he said no. I'm pretty sure General Ham said no on F-16s knowing that N+16 doesn't give you anything, because it's a little too late.

Q How could an F-16 been potentially helpful if a AC-130 was not? I understand they are totally different types of airplanes, but why is one potentially applicable and the other platform is not?

A This is what I think I know as a Navy guy. An F-16 is more surgical, you know. If you've got an observer on the ground who can provide you targeting data, F-16 is a better platform surgically. As I understand the AC-130, that's a weapon of mass destruction almost. I mean, that just lays a carpet of bullets out there, and you've got a lot of collateral damage, I foresee, if you use an AC-130. An F-16 can bore down to a better soda straw of an area.

Q And was it your understanding that there was someone on the ground that could have helped with that targeting?

A I don't know.

Q So you talked a little bit about some discussions and meetings and conferences you had in the run-up to September 11th with the J3s, correct?

A Yes.

Q And I think you said something like --

A The component J3s.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Beg your pardon, the component J3s.

A Yeah.

Q And I think you said that you broached the subject that September 11th is coming up.

A Yeah. Due diligence, prudence, to remind everybody to keep their guard up.

Q So in light of that discussion and those discussions, then jumping ahead to the night of the attack and your pulsing the force available and so forth, you learn about the N+ times of the F-16s, these other things that you're hearing back, were you frustrated with what you had available to you?

A That evening, yes.

Q Yes. Is there a disconnect there? I mean, you had had these discussions about let's prepare for and be thinking ahead for 9/11.

A Right.

Q Something happens.

A Right. I was not frustrated with what happened after 9/11, but I can tell you that, knowing AFRICOM was one of the newest COCOMs, was -- underfunded is not the word. It's just we didn't have forces assigned as yet, and we were probably long overdue to get forces assigned to us. We didn't get the CIF until 1 October, and then again you know about the enabler piece. And again, this is all 20/20, but, yeah, this is the price you pay for taking risk and managing risk badly, you know. You take risks in some places on the planet as it's 9/11 everywhere, and AFRICOM is one place where I guess our leadership decided to take

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

risk. You know, remember, we're in two wars, CENTCOM is getting all the assets.

Q Okay. That's all.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Going back out to the summer timeframe of 2012, I have a few questions about the site security team and the transition that was happening around that time. Just to start off, could you describe the level of knowledge you had about the initial site security team's role in Libya?

A I remember them trying to establish the relationships with the Libyan military and that the intent was they were going to turn into the 1206 counterterrorism training force.

Q Okay.

A SOCAF had -- was the overall commander for leaving those folks there and were making the preps to execute the 1206. So I didn't have any direct command authority over that SST. It was more like I was cognizant that they were there.

Q Okay.

A And in light of the security situation, I was glad they were there.

Q Okay. Did you read the sitreps, for example, that were sent in by the commander of the SST?

A I probably read a few of them. SOCAF sent a daily sitrep to us.

A Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q And it covered wherever he had a small footprint team, there is usually a paragraph in there. So I read everybody's sitreps almost daily, and so I'm sure I did.

OP2 [REDACTED]. Admiral, could you speak up, please. I'm sorry. It's really hard to hear.

Admiral Landolt. Sure.

[REDACTED]

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Now, we understand you were also aware of the circumstances surrounding the reduction in SST personnel -- again, it happened in that late summer timeframe -- and the corresponding change in mission that happened around that timeframe.

A I'd put it differently. I was aware that -- I was trying to explain the options available for Ambassador Stevens.

Q Uh-huh.

A And I sensed that he was pushing for either full control to maintain control of the SST or he wanted to send them back, and I tried to dissuade him from doing that. And I tried during that secure video teleconference in late July, and I don't know if we brought it up again, but he was in Stuttgart for a roundtable I was part of, and we just gave him a big picture AFRICOM command brief really, AFRICOM command brief. I didn't bring it up with him there because I knew he was going to have that conversation with General Ham. And I'm sure General Ham brought it up with him as, here are the options, if you want to keep them, that's fine. But General Ham used to always say to us in private that he always holds -- the Ambassador always holds the ultimate card. He can kick anybody out of the country he wants. But I remember, I think we went from 16 down to 5. The agreement was, okay, we'll bring them back until you get the immunities and privileges that he said he -- Ambassador Stevens said he wanted from the Libyan government. So, okay, so we kept five people there to really maintain security over the weapons and the secure communication equipment there.

[REDACTED]

Q Now, in your professional opinion, was the number of personnel that the SST was reduced to, was that a sufficient number of personnel to have there for the mission?

A For the 1206 mission? Sixteen was about right. I mean, I'm just supporting the commander there. He would know better than me. What I found frustrating, or in my professional opinion I always thought, why do you want to give back security? You know, most of them were special force operators, and I thought it's always good to have those guys around in an environment like that. So I couldn't -- I couldn't dissuade the Ambassador of that.

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

Q So what's the origin of the five or maybe six that remained? I mean, what's the origin, that number?

A The origin was that we'll skinny down from 16 to 6. Those six are just there to maintain the equipment because this is classified equipment. It would be -- it was a logistics effort to get everything out of there, all the weapons and the classified communications gear, and so you just -- they have to be under strict control and 24/7.

Q I mean, it could have been eight, it could have been four. Why five or six?

A Yeah, I don't know.

Q Okay.

A There was less than 16, I guess, significantly less. I'm guessing maybe just the basic, but those other 11, I think it was, came back to Stuttgart because I think we were anticipating getting those

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

immunity and privileges, maybe not in short order, but within the window of that deployment for that team, so we just brought them back to Stuttgart.

ORA

BY [REDACTED]

Q And, Admiral, just to step back. You mentioned your thoughts about why would you give back security, the SST. Do you know -- were you in a position to know for a fact whether it was -- that decision was made by Ambassador Stevens personally or whether that was a decision that brought in the larger State Department? Were you aware of that?

A I'm not in a position to know that.

Q Okay. Thanks.

A I have my supposition. I mean, I have my suspicions, but I really wasn't in a position on that.

ORA [REDACTED]. Okay. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

AR2 BY [REDACTED]

Q So when you went from the 16 down to the 6, you know, eventually there was a transition in authorities from chief of mission to COCOM authority. Do you remember around what timeframe that occurred?

A That would have been, I think, the 3rd of August. I kept saying the 5th, but you corrected me earlier. It was the 3rd.

Q Okay. And was there any documentation that was produced as a result?

A That would have been as a result of the SecDef signed order, the 1206.

Q Okay.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]

Q And just to be clear, it's our understanding that 3 August, '12, would have been the last day of SST as a chief of mission entity, 4 August, '12, being the first day as a COCOM?

A That's how I understand it as well.

AR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q So at a certain point during that timeframe, Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED] took over for Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED] who had been the previous commander of the SST.

A Okay.

Q The group at that point referred to themselves as Team Libya. Are you familiar with Team Libya?

A That rings a bell.

[REDACTED]

Q Okay.

A Right.

Q Okay. And could you describe their mission from that point forward once Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED] --

A That would have been the 1206. Well, are you saying after they skinned down to five?

Q Correct.

A I think it was just benign, that they were there to protect the equipment, but also to take advantage of any opportunity that might have arisen to engage with Libyan military.

Q Okay. And do you know at that point if that group was providing Embassy security?

A I don't think they were, but they were available, too. I mean, why not.

Q Okay.

A I'm sure that they were -- General Ham, and Brian Losey is the same way, I mean, if asked, we're there for you.

Q Okay. Did you have visibility of any shifts in personnel that happened during that timeframe on the SST?

A No.

Q Okay.

A No, JB just doesn't get that granular sometimes.

Q I understand.

A That's Brian's lane, Brian Losey.

Q Okay.

[REDACTED]

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

Q So there has been various discussions forwarding, and you probably read this in the press, about Colonel [REDACTED] who commanded the Team Libya unit --

A Right.

Q -- has testified before the Armed Services Committee, in fact, briefed before the Armed Services Committee that at one point he wanted to move from Tripoli forward to Benghazi. I mean, have you read about that?

A I have, but not in enough detail to where it would have made a difference to me. I recall --

Q My question was, did you have any knowledge at the time of his interest, not --

A I don't recall.

Q Okay.

A -- a year-and-a-half later.

Q Been no discussions at the FPOC about that possibility?

A No, because I remember it wasn't our idea. It was somebody's idea to come up with the plane that flew over there, and they put the right people on it, as far as I could tell. I mean, when I heard there were some security folks who were going over there, I specifically heard Seals were on that plane, not knowing they might have been, you know, retired Seals. Retired is not the right word but --

Q Sure.

A And I thought that's probably a good idea. And to get a plane

[REDACTED]

over there, you know, if we could get the Ambassador, great, get him on a plane and get him the heck out of there. So I just remember all that was goodness at the time, the plane was going over there with six or seven bright folks and capable folks.

Q Sure. That's all.

OR2 [REDACTED] We can move on?

AR1 [REDACTED] Yeah.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]

Q Just a few more questions.

A Sure.

Q We're almost done. One quick follow-up on communications or communications you were aware of between AFRICOM headquarters and the Embassy, specifically Lieutenant Colonel [REDACTED]

A Right.

Q Just was communications with the DAT specifically for providing updates or was he asking for anything from AFRICOM?

A I think it was more in the update lane.

Q Yeah.

A And vice versa. We were telling him the status of getting the Medevac plane ready and down there.

Q Okay.

A I recall it being more we were taking the feed from him of what was going on.

Q Okay. Okay.

Shifting gears again, the last time. After the attack --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Uh-huh.

Q -- were you ever debriefed by your chain of command or other U.S. military personnel about what had taken place specifically in Benghazi on the night of the attack?

A No.

Q Okay. To your knowledge, did the U.S. military conduct a formal after action review of what had taken place in Benghazi?

A U.S. military, no. I think some of our units did. AFRICOM was wrapped up with the ARB, and I remember my staff and I fielding a lot of RFIs, requests for information, and for the ARB.

Q Okay. So the RFI is from the ARB?

A Correct.

Q Okay. And then were you ever interviewed by the ARB?

A I was not.

Q Okay. That's all I have.

OR2 [REDACTED] We can go off the record for one moment.

[Discussion off the record.]

001 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Go back on the record.

A Okay.

Q Admiral, in the last hour you had mentioned your thoughts on whether an F-16, what role it could have played on the night of the attacks, and we've heard some statements, received some testimony that the F-16 may not have been an appropriate tool to use that night. I'm wondering if maybe you can help square those two things for us, maybe

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

just explain, you know, your awareness of the threat environment that night in Benghazi.

A Let me go back to the textbook example of the definition of close air support, but if you've got -- and the previous -- in a previous section the gentleman asked if there was anybody on the ground, and I did not know. But if there was a person on the ground, he would have had to have the right equipment, which from the start is probably a no, and because you have to have laser pointers and the kind of equipment you need to pinpoint where you want ordnance placed.

But in a close air support role on an F-16, if you've got perfect intelligence, it might be helpful if there is people under duress, and for instance, for taking out those mortars. But a pilot of an F-16 can't look at a target and do it himself, you know, in that case. So, you know, hypothetically, an F-16 might have been helpful if we would have had much better intelligence on the ground and the right people on the ground to help target.

002 BY [REDACTED]:

Q And you say if. You don't know that to be -- you did not know at the time that those variables were in fact in place that night, that you had the intelligence?

A No.

Q Okay.

A We didn't have intelligence. Again, N+16, the intelligence could change over the course of 24 hours, which is about how long it would have taken to get an F-16 over there. And then, you know -- again,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

this is all in retrospect -- the fire fight was very short in duration. And so, you know, a day later it was all over.

Q You know, and again, putting ourselves, say, in your shoes, where you're in the command center having to make these assessments and make these calls, would it be fair to say that there's a whole lot of tools that in theory you might have but simply aren't available?

A That's correct. Twice a year I go to the Pentagon with all the other J3s and we fight for resources, and that was really the point I was trying to get to your comment earlier, was that, you know, we have to manage risk.

Q Right.

A And AFRICOM does not get a lot of resources because when you're fighting two wars, CENTCOM was getting all the resources.

Q I do want to get to that in second, but back to, say, the night of the attacks. When you considered certain aircraft such as the F-16, again, knowing that I think you used the term N+16, roughly 20 hours to have that asset even be available to go airborne, even if you knew what the mission was.

A Right.

Q That information is known fairly early into this attack, and so -- is that correct?

A It was known that night.

Q Fairly early into the attack?

A I think it was known after the first attack, before the second attack.

[REDACTED]

Q Okay.

A But we had no idea a second attack was coming.

Q And so is it generally that you don't spend a lot of time mulling over something that, because of the time requirements, it's just not going to be available, you move on to the next --

A Right.

Q -- tool in your box?

A That's correct.

Q Okay.

A I would say that's fair.

Q And I also wanted to talk, in the last hour you had mentioned that you had some frustration on the night of the attacks in terms of the kinds of things that were available to you. You had also mentioned two rounds ago the tyranny of distance and the complexity of the African continent, the size of it?

A Right.

Q That's correct?

A That's correct.

Q And how much of the African continent is AFRICOM responsible for?

A The entire continent, save Egypt.

Q Save Egypt?

A And including some outlying islands, like Sao Tome, Principe, Comoros, Madagascar.

Q And is it fair to say that there is just lots of different

concerns and hotspots on the African continent?

A It is fair to say, and we take risk in various parts of that continent. And as it was laid out in the ex ord that came out the following April, we were told to focus on the high risk embassies, 14 high risk embassies.

Q But prior to the attacks in Libya, what was on your plate? What areas were you concerned about?

A General Ham's priorities were Somalia, disrupting the terrorist network there, and I'd say after that it would have been Northwest Africa, when we started building capacity there.

Q Would it be fair to say that on the African continent there were lots of possible places where something could go wrong?

A Absolutely. I think we've seen that since 9/11 as well.

Q All right. So I guess I'm just trying to understand, you know, it's easy 20/20 hindsight to say you should have been paying attention to this particular place or some other particular place, but I guess I'm trying to understand, prior to the attacks in Benghazi, you know, what areas, you know, are you most thinking that something could go wrong? Is this three areas, five areas?

A Somalia was always General Ham's number one priority until 9/11, and then there were probably two priorities. And then Mali, I remember, being huge at the time --

Q Why Mali?

A Because a month before the coup had taken place, and we were working very closely with Ambassador Leonard in Mali to try to bring

[REDACTED]

Mali back into the fold.

Q And why Somalia?

A Because of the terrorist networks.

Q Okay. And then where else beyond those two?

A Northwest Africa -- or excuse me, writ large Mali, Somalia, we had efforts ongoing with Kony, we had -- and even though --

001

BY [REDACTED]

Q Joseph Kony?

A Joseph Kony, correct. [REDACTED] it's called. And Nigeria had all the indications of a failing state, and we had a lot of brainstorming sessions on that, on Nigeria.

002

BY [REDACTED]:

Q And so there is American personnel in all these places that you've made reference to, correct?

A Correct.

Q And so there is the possibility that in those and perhaps more areas on the African continent you might have to have a military response, is that correct, a rescue attempt or what have you?

A That's always a possibility.

Q Okay. And for all of those, you would have serious time and distance matters?

A And we do to this day.

Q Yeah. Okay.

001

BY [REDACTED]:

Q I thought I had heard you mention during the last hour that

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

in connection with our discussion about the site security team, that the Secretary of Defense had signed an order. Can you just clarify for us what that order was and when he would have signed that?

A I think that's the 1206 order, and he would have signed it late July, I believe. That's something I would have tracked or would have been made aware. Our legal folks would have tracked something like that administratively and our J5 folks with regard to policy.

Q Okay.

A Because that's a policy decision, signing an order like that.

Q You had mentioned a few of the discussions or conversations that you had had with the Ambassador. Did Ambassador Stevens ever personally explain to you why the State Department didn't renew the site security team?

A He never did, no.

Q Okay.

ODD BY [REDACTED]:

Q One more thing. And just to be clear, and I touched on this on the last hour, where you sat in AFRICOM, you had conversations with General Ham, correct?

A Correct.

Q Okay. And General Ham is both receiving information and also providing information?

A Correct.

Q Is that correct?

A That evening, yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Okay. Where was General Ham getting his information from?
Did you know?

A That evening?

Q Yes, sir.

A I think it was direct from the Chairman and Secretary. I think they were all comparing notes with what they were seeing, was my sense.

Q Okay.

A But I do not know for sure.

Q And did General Ham seem informed of the situation?

A He did.

Q Okay. Did it seem that General Ham was getting good information from somewhere here in the United States?

A My sense was yes, but I don't think any of us felt comfortable with knowing the big picture, you know. I mean, we didn't know where the Ambassador was.

Q But again, it did appear that he was getting information?

A I think he was confident with what we were providing him, and when he spoke to us on the atmospherics back here our sense was he was plugged in.

Q Okay.

ODI BY [REDACTED]

Q Thank you. One last housekeeping matter. I believe you had, in characterizing or discussing how the communications were made between Washington and the FPOC, you used the phrase a red switch call.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Correct.

Q Can you just explain to us what that is?

A It's a secure telephone, and it's got everybody's phone number already plugged into it, from the President on down, Secretary of Defense on down, past the President.

Q Okay.

CD1 [REDACTED] Thank you. That's it. We're off the record.

OR2 [REDACTED] Back on the record for a minute. So, Admiral, I just wanted to thank you on behalf of Chairman Issa for coming here today and for your cooperation for the interview?

Admiral Landolt. Sure. I hope it was helpful.

OR2 [REDACTED]. It was. Thank you.

OR2 [REDACTED] On the record, we would also like to thank you from the Democratic side of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and by all means, we'd like to thank you for your many years of service that you gave for your country. Thank you.

Admiral Landolt. It was a great ride.

AR1 [REDACTED]. For the record, the Armed Services Committee thanks you for your participation.

Admiral Landolt. All right. Thank you all.

[Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

[REDACTED]



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

