

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

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW OF: ETHAN CHORIN

FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2016

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room 1036, Longworth House Office Building, commencing at 2:08 p.m.

Appearances:

For the SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI:

SHARON JACKSON, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

SHERIA CLARKE, COUNSEL

KIM BETZ, MEMBER OUTREACH LIAISON

SUSANNE SACHSMAN GROOMS, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR/GENERAL COUNSEL

ERIN O'BRIEN, MINORITY DETAILEE

For the U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE:

AUSTIN EVERS

Ms. Jackson. So we will begin. This is a transcribed interview of Dr. Ethan Chorin, conducted by the House Select Committee on Benghazi. This interview is being conducted voluntarily as part of the committee's investigation into the attacks on the U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, and matters related to that pursuant to House Resolution 567 of the 113th Congress, and House Resolution 5 of the 114th Congress.

Dr. Chorin, I would ask that you state your full name for the record, please.

Mr. Chorin. Ethan Daniel Chorin.

Ms. Jackson. Dr. Chorin, thank you very much for your appearance on this telephonic interview today. Again, my name is Sharon Jackson. I'm with the committee's majority staff. Given that we are doing this by telephone, we will try to remember to introduce ourselves or identify who is speaking at the time, but I am going to do the majority of your questions for perhaps up to an hour, and then I will turn it over to my minority colleagues on the committee.

Do you have any questions regarding this interview before we get started?

Mr. Chorin. No.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Generally what we do is, I, or perhaps, Ms. Betz will have a question or two. We will ask questions for up to an hour, and then we turn it over to our colleagues on the minority side and they will ask questions for up to an hour. And we generally rotate back and forth until we have exhausted all of our questions.

We can take a break at any time, so if you want, if you need to, you know, stretch your legs, get a coffee, hopefully not an adult beverage during the middle of our interview, but in case you do, just let us know, and we will take a break and allow you an opportunity to do whatever you need, and then we will resume.

Mr. Chorin. Okay.

Ms. Jackson. We are on an open telephone line, so this session will be unclassified. I don't anticipate that you would have any classified information to disclose to us, but if, for any reason, you think you are in that realm, please just let us know and we will either withdraw the question or make arrangements to have it asked in a more appropriate setting.

Mr. Chorin. Okay.

Ms. Jackson. We do have an official reporter taking down everything that is said to make a complete record of this. So we will ask -- she will let us know, and I give her permission to let us know if for any reason she can't pick up on an answer, or if she doesn't get all of the question.

We are doing this telephonically, so if there is, at any time, you didn't hear all of a question or would like it to be restated or rephrased, please just let us know and we will be happy to do it. If we ask a compound question and you want it broken down, again, please let us know, because we are trying to get the best record that we can with regard to this investigation.

And now I just have a few final questions. Dr. Chorin, do you

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

Mr. Chorin. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. All right, do you understand that this applies to questions that are posed by congressional staff in an interview?

Mr. Chorin. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. And do you understand that any witness who knowingly provides false testimony could be subject to criminal prosecution for perjury or making false statements?

Mr. Chorin. Yes.

Ms. Jackson. Is there any reason that you know of that you would not be able to give truthful answers to today's questions?

Mr. Chorin. No.

Ms. Jackson. Okay. Thank you.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Dr. Chorin, I understand that you worked for the State Department and was assigned in Libya in the years 2004, 2005, and 2006. Is that the approximate time period you were there?

A Yes.

Mr. Evers. Sharon, this is Austin. Can I just put something on the record really quickly?

Ms. Jackson. Yes.

Mr. Evers. So again, this is Austin Evers from the State Department. We helped facilitate this interview and certainly

appreciate the opportunity to sit in on it. With the indulgence of the committee, we did offer Mr. Chorin that if he has questions that he would like to ask during the interview, if he wants to know about ground rules or anything like that, that we would be happy to talk to him sort of, you know, off the record, you know, notwithstanding the fact that we don't actually -- he is not a current employee, and I think what you mostly what you want to talk to him about is a period when he was not a State Department employee.

I hope that's okay. It may not arise, but we just wanted to kind play that facilitating role, and if it comes up, I'm happy to discuss it with folks.

Ms. Jackson. That's fine from our perspective.

Mr. Evers. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chorin. Thanks.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Okay. So back to the questions. Dr. Chorin, when precisely were you in Libya in the early 2000s?

A I was on a temporary assignment, I believe, in August, September of 2004, and then left in either July or early August of, I believe, late July of 2006.

Q Okay. And then it is our understanding that you were working in the private sector in Benghazi, Libya, in 2011. Is that correct? Or were you in Benghazi earlier than 2011?

A Well, I made trips to Benghazi during the posting with the State Department, so, and I came back to Libya in 2011 for the first

time in late July as the head of -- co-director of a nonprofit.

Q Okay. And so focusing on that time in July of 2011, can you describe what you were doing in Benghazi as codirector of this nonprofit group?

A I and a Libyan American colleague had decided that we were going to try to facilitate a medical exchange and development in Benghazi, particularly in the area of trauma, also diabetes-related issues and I had spent several months contacting people that I had professional relationships with at various U.S. teaching hospitals. And we started to put that plan into effect.

Q Okay. And was one of those teaching hospitals Massachusetts General Hospital?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Were there other hospitals in the U.S. that you were working with to coordinate care in Libya?

A We had been speaking -- I had been speaking with UCSF, University of California, San Francisco, and Yale as well.

Q Okay. When you were in Benghazi in July of 2011, did you have any interactions with then-envoy Chris Stevens?

A Yes, we had a vague plan to meet up at that point, but he had to leave and go back to Washington for consultations. I did not meet him on that occasion.

Q So did you ever meet with him while he was the Envoy in Benghazi?

A I did not meet with him personally while he was the Envoy.

We may have exchanged emails, and --

Q And from the time period of July of 2011, how long were you in Benghazi?

A I believe I made four, possibly five trips between July 28 of 2011, and September 10 through 12, 2012.

Q And approximately, how long would each of those trips be?

A One to two -- 1 week to 10 days.

Q Okay. And were all of those trips for the purpose of trying to facilitate this medical cooperation between U.S. hospitals and Libyan facilities?

A Yes. I was also writing a book at the time, ^A~~the~~ History of the Libyan Revolution, so I also took the opportunity to interview various people.

Q And where would you generally stay when you were in Libya?

A At the Tibesti Hotel.

Q Thank you. And during your trips, these four or five trips in the second half of 2001 and through September of 2012, did you have any interaction with persons who were at the U.S. facility there, whether -- you have told us it wasn't then Envoy Stevens, but there was a series of security officers or security personnel.

Did you have any contact with them up until September of 2012?

A First, if I could clarify something about the previous point?

Q Yes.

A I believe it was, at most, four trips and it wasn't five.

Second, to answer your last question, I had -- we had interaction with somebody most trips. In the first one, I had spoken at least on one occasion with [REDACTED] at the mission. And I had been in communication with then-Envoy and then-Ambassador Stevens about most of those trips.

Q Prior to going?

A Yes. I kept him updated on the general plan.

Q When you would arrive, or prior to going into Libya, would you let the U.S. Government know of your travel plans and purpose? I understand that part of the time, or at least for your first trip, the Embassy in Tripoli was closed, but sort of did you check in to let anybody in the U.S. Government know that you were going to be in Libya for those trips?

A Well, usually Chris Stevens. And on the last occasion, I -- we had communications with the Embassy about coordinating the trips, and a meeting with Ambassador Stevens in Tripoli, not in Benghazi.

Q Okay. Prior to July of 2011, did you know Ambassador Stevens?

A Yes.

Q And how did you know him?

A We were introduced by colleagues at the State Department while I was still posted to Libya. He had reached out to me regarding, I guess, I believe he had -- as soon as he found out that he would be posted to Libya as DCM, he reached out either directly or through some

mutual friend, mutual colleagues to essentially pick my brain about what was going on.

Q Okay. So he -- the two of you did not overlap assignments in Libya. Is that correct?

A I believe we were supposed to, but he wound up -- again, this is according to my recollection. I think he was either delayed a year, ~~or~~ he certainly came after I did. We did not overlap.

Q Okay. So the two of you -- sometime while you were still working in Libya for the State Department, you and he began communicating or corresponding regarding your experience in Libya? Is that a correct understanding on my part?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And did you continue that communication and conversations with him after that time?

A Yes, there were -- I think after he left Libya, we did not have any further correspondence until just after the Libyan -- the outbreak of the Libyan revolution.

Q So there's a gap between the time he terminated being the Deputy Chief of Mission, and the Libyan revolution. Is that correct?

A That's correct.

Q And how would you primarily communicate with Ambassador Chris Stevens? Would it be by email? By phone? In person?

A It was mainly by email. Yeah.

Q Okay. You told us before that towards the latter part of 2011, then-Envoy Stevens was called back for consultations in

Washington. And did you have any face-to-face meetings with him at that time?

A Actually, from the time I was -- started communicating with him while I was still posted to Libya, the State Department until March of 2012. Of course, our communications were entirely over the phone or email. We had a number of things in common, and he and I had read, respectively, pieces the other had written. So it was sort of a connection that way, but the first time that I met him in person was in, I believe, early March of 2012.

Q And was that at a time when he was awaiting confirmation to become the Ambassador to Libya?

A That is correct.

Q Okay. And did you meet with him here in D.C.?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And did you discuss the current situation in Libya during that meeting?

A We did.

Q Okay. And what can you tell us about that conversation? What was then soon-to-be-Ambassador Stevens feelings about the stability of Libya, the security situation there, the prospects for the revolution being successful? Can you just give us a rundown of your conversation with him as it pertained to Libya?

A Okay. Well, obviously, that was some time ago, so my thoughts on that are essentially colored by time, but it was also a somewhat strange meeting in the sense that we knew quite a bit about

one another in corresponding, but this was the first time we actually met face-to-face.

And we -- I was also interviewing him quasi formally for my books. So I had a series of pre-prepared questions that I asked him. But we did talk about the situation in Libya, of course, and he expressed quite a bit of concern that things were quickly degenerating security-wise, and otherwise, and was quite adamant that attention needed to be paid to the eastern regions in Benghazi, in particular.

Q Did he elaborate as to what he thought needed to be done?

A He expressed his concern that there might be an abatement ^{attention} in ~~the tension~~ with respect to Libya after the early push, and that there needed to be reconstruction efforts and civil society, you know, building efforts to compensate for the lack of infrastructure and to consolidate security, particularly in the east.

Q Okay. Did he offer any opinion as to whether he thought the U.S. Government needed to be doing more to assist in the reconstruction? I'm sorry?

A Yeah, this was -- I mean, I should say, this was also off the record with respect to the book that I was writing, so this was not meant to be a public conversation or anything that was going to appear typically in the -- in the book.

Could I ask you to repeat that question?

Q Yeah, I believe the question was, did he offer any opinions or thoughts on whether the U.S. Government could be doing more, or should be doing more to assist in the reconstruction or rebuilding of

the Libyan civil society?

A Yes. I believe he told me -- well, he told me that he felt the United States Government should be doing quite a bit more to help peace and support for the transition. He also expressed quite a bit of consciousness about the fact that there were, you know, a number of political forces at work, and if I can characterize his comments thereafter, it was hoping that he would get more assistance in that arena, talking specifically about the reconstruction efforts and that all -- he was facing a really tough job ahead. And I detected there was a -- I will leave it at that.

Q Okay. Did he get any more specific about how he thought the U.S. Government needed to assist in the reconstruction? Was it in particular areas? Was it, you know, military support to Libya? Was it more medical aid? Was he any more specific? Because as I take a moment to step back one of the things that this committee will be doing is making recommendations to hopefully improve the situation and ensure that another Benghazi does not happen.

So you are one person who can give us Ambassador Stevens' insights on what he saw needed to be done.

A Well, if I can also add a little bit of background to this in the sense that we started communicating -- we had -- I wouldn't say we communicated on an extremely regular basis, but we had been talking. I think one of our reference points was the assassination of Abdul Fatah Younis in Benghazi on the -- in late July.

He was not there in Benghazi at that time, as I mentioned earlier,

but the situation was extremely tense and I had written one piece for Foreign Policy which resonated with him, and we picked up on those thoughts in this conversation that we are talking about now. So there wasn't a lot of -- we had had some of this conversation before, is what I'm trying to say.

He felt that -- I'm being very careful not to put anything, any words in his mouth, but to summarize what I understood for what he said was that, you know, essentially, Benghazi was not only the epicenter of the revolution, but a long-neglected part of the Libyan polity, and that the, essentially -- what I got from him was that he was concerned that all of the attention was moving where -- all of those factors that you mentioned, militarily, security-wise, medical, to the epicenter activities moving to Tripoli. And I believe what his point was, that he was afraid that the situation in Benghazi could degenerate as a result of that relative shift of the tension.

And we both agreed that Benghazi was particularly important for one, the threat of potential future spread of extremist activity, as well as the fact that, you know, many of Libya's thinkers, intellectuals, you know, people with high levels of education, also came from Benghazi, and that there was a sort of an, essentially, again, without putting words into his mouth, that Benghazi would be critical to future, to Libya's future health as a unified state.

Q Did he offer any opinion as to what he -- you mentioned extremism. Did he elaborate any further on what he saw as either the rise of extremism, or the expansion of extremism, or where he thought

extremism was being fostered? Did he express any further concerns with respect to that?

A I think a lot of the conversation was built on previous conversations, so as I mentioned before, you had talked about, or at least via our other work, I mean, Ambassador Stevens had written one cable in particular that I had read at that point on the situation in Derna, and which had been, you know, that was part of the --

Q I'm sorry, was part of what?

A -- which was released in the Wikileaks context. There was, and I had written this piece, I mean, it was widely known, or believed at the time that either Ansar al-Sharia, or one of its affiliates was responsible for, or had some connection to the death of the assassination of Abdul Fatah Younis. I should actually correct that by saying that it wasn't -- it was an Islamist faction that that event was attributed to. But that's the background to our conversation. So there was no explicit mentioning in the Washington conversation about specific names of individuals or groups, but it was clear that that was part of what he was concerned about.

Q Okay. And what, if anything, did he believe that the U.S. Government needed to do to counter that?

A Again, I think he was advocating a -- I know he was advocating a more intensive support, both financial and in terms of security, and social services would be implicit, meaning being that if one could help the incomplete infrastructure in Benghazi, provide for state infrastructure, provide for -- provide services to the

people, that this would make it less likely that, you know, essentially solidify the -- those who wanted to see order in that area and in Libya, in general.

Q Did he express any opinion about his own personal security, either in Benghazi or in Tripoli, or that of the other U.S. Government personnel that were working either in Benghazi or at the Embassy in Tripoli?

A Not specifically. He did say that he was very concerned that we were at a turning point, and that things could go badly quickly.

Q And again, this is your conversation in March of 2012 here in D.C.?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Were there other occasions when you would talk with or communicate with Ambassador Stevens about the security of the facilities and personnel, either in Tripoli, or Benghazi?

A We did not have those specific conversations, no.

Q Dr. Chorin, we have talked a lot about Ambassador Stevens' perceptions and beliefs about the post-revolutionary rebuilding of Libya, and you have told us some of Ambassador Stevens' thoughts on the matter. Did you share his beliefs? You studied Libya for a long time. Did you personally believe that the U.S. Government was doing enough, or should the U.S. Government be doing more?

A I was -- I think the interesting thing about our meeting that I came away from, and which strengthened my previous impressions, was that Ambassador Stevens and I were very much aligned on certainly

all of the points that we discussed. I'm not sure I can say anything, you know, more than that. I have got -- I judge that based on his writing, and what he conveyed to me in previous -- the previous phone conversations as well as that meeting. So with a fair degree of confidence, I think I can say that our views were very much aligned.

Q All right.

A And I did think that the -- I was -- I thought that it was the right thing to do, the intervention, particularly back to in March of 2011, to support the rebel forces in Benghazi, and I felt that it was very important to also work for the United States to end the other parties involved to implement some form of assistance in terms of some, what would be under the classification of the then-evolving responsibility to rebuild.

And obviously, I felt very strongly about, but the thing that I personally could do to help, was to use some of my knowledge of development, and connections with the medical field to try to help with -- on the medical side.

Q Dr. Chorin, you have written about the fact that it's your belief that the U.S. Government should have done more in rebuilding Libya. Can you give us any more -- can you give us specifics about how you thought the U.S. Government's post-toppling of Qadhafi intervention should have gone?

A I think that -- well, let me give you an example. In Benghazi, the situation there was basically tolerable. There was -- and promising, in many respects, right after the revolution.

I believe it took more than a year for the security situation to degenerate to a point where it became extremely worrisome.

Q Dr. Chorin, I'm sorry to interrupt, but could I ask you to be a little more specific when you talk about when the revolution was successful. Are you talking August, September October of 2011? Could you just be a little more specific on the timeframe?

A Sure. From the -- from the U.S./NATO intervention, to, let's say, May of 2011, well, actually, that's -- I'm sorry, 2012.

Q Okay. All right. So --

A The security situation started to deteriorate very rapidly starting around May of 2012. So there was a bit more than a year there.

Q And were you in Benghazi in the spring/summer of 2012?

A Spring/summer of 2012, yes. I do not, at the moment, have with me the -- and I apologize for that, the specific dates, but we were there, I believe, 2 months -- in, I believe it was in May of 2012.

Q Okay. But even if you weren't in country, you were keeping tabs on the security situation in Libya and Benghazi in particular?

A Very much so. I felt that was my responsibility. We had engaged with the -- with Massachusetts General, and Brigham and Women's Hospitals at that point, and none of the staff there had much knowledge, local knowledge, so I was keeping a very close watch as I would be doing otherwise for -- on developments in the region in Benghazi, in particular.

Q So what was happening in approximately May of 2012? What difference did you start -- what difference did you see at that time

frame?

A Again, the -- and there is a long list of incidents that began around in that region of early June until -- and then on. There was an attempt on -- attempted on -- well, there was an attack on the British Ambassador. There was an IED device at the mission. There was kidnapping of some -- involving medical workers. There was, if you plucked the incidents from May to the attack on the mission, the number -- the frequency and intensity of those attacks appeared to be growing.

Q And how would you receive updates on what was going on in Benghazi when you weren't physically there? Did you monitor international papers? Did you get updates from people at the Consulate? Did you have your -- were there other Libyan nationals that you worked with that kept you updated? What were your different sources of information with respect to the security situation, and did those sources also include then-Ambassador Stevens?

A My sources were varied. I had myself and my colleague. My colleague is a Libyan American, he had not been back for many years, and had a very wide family network, particularly in Benghazi. I would read social media, Facebook. At that time, I was not looking so much at Twitter, but at Facebook posted in Arabic, and newspapers like Asharq Al-Awsat and other Arabic language local sources and my own contact network, as well as the hospital staff to some degree, but not to a great degree.

Q Okay. You gave us the name of a foreign newspaper, and for

the reporter, could I ask you to spell that for us, please?

A It's A-s-h-a-r-q, dash A-l-A-w-s-a-t.

Q You just made our reporter smile. Dr. Chorin, if I could move forward to September of 2012, it is our understanding that you were in Benghazi, Libya, at least on the 11th and 12th of September. Is that correct?

A I arrived on the 10th.

Q You arrived --

A And my colleagues -- yeah.

Q Okay. Were you on the same plane as Ambassador Stevens?

A I was not. I came in from Istanbul.

Q Okay. And prior to arriving, did you know that Ambassador Stevens was going to be in Benghazi?

A No. That was a surprise to me.

Q Okay. And how did you find out?

A I found out from my colleague who has relatives in the -- on the hospital and medical center staff, who heard from one of his cousins, I believe.

Q One of his cousins?

A Well, I can't be sure what the source was, but the, at that point, it seemed to be quite well-known that Ambassador Stevens was in town, and he had several meetings at which I'm sure some of your other interviewees have spoken.

Q Okay. Had you attempted to make any arrangements to see Ambassador Stevens in Tripoli for this September trip of yours?

A Yes. Originally, we were going to fly from Benghazi to Tripoli to meet with Ambassador Stevens after we were in country.

Q And why didn't that trip take place?

A Because I had -- there was a fatality, there was an attack on the airport road. I'm, at the moment, blanking on the details, but there was an incident which made me concerned about taking other non-Libya-familiar colleagues into Tripoli.

Q Was that an attack in Tripoli or Benghazi? Which airport?

A In Tripoli. I felt at the time more -- I mean also, I felt more comfortable in -- see, starting this project, I felt more comfortable in Benghazi than I did in Tripoli. I simply had more information. So -- about the situation in Benghazi.

Q Would you -- did you spend any time in Tripoli in 2011 and 2012?

A I did not.

Q Okay. So whenever you were in country in Libya, you were in Benghazi, or in the vicinity of Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q Okay. So you arrive on the 10th, and you learn that Ambassador Stevens happens to be in Benghazi. What do you do with that information?

A I sent him an email, and he responded, you know, quite quickly.

Q Okay. And then did you set up a meeting with him?

A And I -- yes, well, we didn't, not immediately. We traded

emails. We were going to -- he said he would definitely like to meet, I believe. And we were going to make the arrangements to the following day to --

Q Okay. And what particularly did you want to accomplish in this meeting? It is our understanding that it was going to be at the Benghazi Medical Center, and it was to talk about this joint, or this collaboration between U.S. hospitals and the Benghazi Medical Center, but we would like to hear from you if we are correct in that assessment, and what was the purpose of the meeting?

A Well, the purpose of the meeting was, you know, I would check in with Ambassador Stevens whenever I could, and, you know, as you said before, every trip we took. And we had previously made arrangements to meet with him in Tripoli. So since I, you know, one reason it was a courtesy call, the second one is that the partnership that we had facilitated had reached another stage. There was a large denomination memorandum of understanding that my colleague and I had helped the two sides form, which would have been signed on the 10th.

Q And I had mentioned the Benghazi Medical Center. Was that the commonly understood name of the facility that we are talking about?

A Yes, BMC.

Q Was that the only medical facility in Benghazi? Was it known as "the hospital," or was there more than one hospital in Benghazi?

A No, there were five major medical centers, and I believe two specialist centers. So this was one of the, you know, one of

the -- well, Benghazi Medical Center was the largest tertiary care facility in Benghazi, and actually all of Libya. Not all of its capacity was being used, but it was a focus of the, certainly, the regional -- attempts to -- if there was a facility in Libya that was going to be developed as a National Center of Excellence it would be in Benghazi, and it would be the Benghazi Medical Center.

Q Okay. Thank you. That's helpful. So back to September 10, you were trading emails back and forth with Ambassador Stevens, I assume updating him on your progress and seeing if he has time to meet. Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And then, do you reach an agreement to meet on the 11th or 12th, or does this back and forth continue into the 11th?

A It continued into the 11th. Ambassador Stevens had suggested that -- well, actually, I believe what happened was we communicated on the morning of the 11th, and he -- there was a short phone call. My phone was not working for some reason, so again, so he had a short conversation with my colleague. And we -- I had picked up the -- so at that point, the notion of our meeting and his hearing more about the situation at BMC, and our plans were set, we were to communicate again later that afternoon.

My recollection is that there was another set of emails that went back and forth, and he called, again, on my colleague's phone, I believe somewhere between 4:30 and 5:30, when we were back at the Tibesti Hotel, and that is the first time that I really had a chance to talk to him

for any length of time. I -- the cafe in the hotel was quite crowded, so I took the call off to the side and explained to him what we had been doing. And he was quite noticeably encouraged, and if I dare say, happy that -- at what had gone on.

He didn't realize that the negotiations had proceeded so fast, and he essentially offered two choices: either we come to the compound that evening, or what his preference was that we go to the -- that he come to the hospital the next morning.

Would you like me to continue in this vein?

Q Yes, please do.

A So he was quite -- we left that open for a little bit, and then he said that -- actually, ~~we~~^{he} thought it was very important for the U.S. Government to have a presence at the BMC, and particularly, because I think there was something that we could almost surely announce at that point, though that wasn't made explicit.

He did say that he was very -- that there were serious security concerns, and that he would prefer if I discussed this with his -- one of his detail, and that that person would call me back in an hour or so -- after an hour or so.

Q So this is the conversation in the late afternoon. You're at the Tibesti Hotel, and you have a longer conversation, and you are making arrangements to meet the next day at the Benghazi Medical Center. Is that correct?

A That's correct.

Q Okay. And -- but during that conversation Ambassador

Stevens says that there are some serious security concerns, and he wants you to coordinate with one or more members of his security detail?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A I think the -- the gist, I don't want to quote verbatim, but the gist was that there were factors that were causing them to be very careful about security, and the BMC could be aware that, you know, there needs to be a security plan and various details gone over before he came over there.

Q Was there -- did he express to you, or in any subsequent conversations with his security detail, did they express to you the lack of security or any specific problems with the medical center, with the Benghazi Medical Center?

A He didn't mention any lack of security on his part. He did say that it would be logistically not necessarily ~~straight~~ ^{straight forward} but they would have to -- if I'm recalling correctly -- to map out the compound, and make a backdoor approach in the sense that they would have to come, I believe, through a side entrance, and that -- again, more of these details came from his security person. But I think that's the limit of what he discussed.

Q Okay. So if you would, just continue and walk us through the additional events that happened after this phone call with Ambassador Stevens. Any subsequent calls with him, any subsequent communications with his security detail, just kind of walk us through the events, please.

A Okay. So I -- and so the security -- the security person had a first name, and I somehow -- I assumed it was not his real name, but who knows? And I don't remember what the name was. It may have been [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] I don't know. He called, and we basically just went over -- the point was fairly simple. He repeated what Ambassador Stevens said, and asked that I be in touch.

He said that there would be a group of people with Ambassador Stevens, and that they would be carrying concealed weapons. And that it was important that the director of the hospital understood that. So he wanted me to call the director, and then we would speak again.

So, I did call the director, and he was not available at the time. He wanted me to call him back, I believe, so I -- my colleagues and I went to have dinner. That must have been around 8 o'clock or so. And then, I believe, I got a call back from the director, let's see, this -- I'm just making sure that I have got this right. There was a second call with the director a bit later. We were having some problems reaching him, and this got into about 9:30, 9:40.

And I spoke to the director, and there was sort of -- it was an odd conversation which went on for several minutes. And at the end of it, he asked me, in a somewhat understated way, whether I understood that there was something going on at the compound. And I said I had no -- certainly, no idea of what was happening. And again, he said he would call me back.

Q Were you at the Tibesti Hotel at the time?

A Yes.

Q Okay. And how far is the Tibesti Hotel from the U.S. compound, approximately?

A I looked it up. I believe it's at least a couple of miles.

Q Okay. So the director of the Benghazi Medical Center was the first to alert that you something unusual was going on at the U.S. compound?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Did he elaborate? Did you ask him what he meant by that?

A Yeah. He said he was in communication with the local security forces and with other important persons in the Benghazi infrastructure, and that he didn't have any more information.

Q Did he indicate in any way that there was an attack, or a protest, or did he give you any type of elaboration as to what was going on there?

A No. It was very vague, but it was quite ominous.

Q Okay. Now how long had it been since you had talked to anyone at the compound?

A It had been, by that point, at least an hour, possibly an hour-and-a-half.

Q Okay. And so when was the last time, approximately, that you had talked to Ambassador Stevens?

A The only call that I had with Ambassador Stevens on this trip was the one that took place around 4:30, 5.

Q Okay. Had Ambassador Stevens said, other than his

conversation with you about security for the meeting at the Benghazi Medical Center, had he talked about any of the security at the compound as he was there that day?

A No.

Q For example, did he mention that he was having all of his meetings on compound because it was the anniversary of 9/11, or he wasn't leaving the compound for meetings that day?

A I do believe that he mentioned that he was not leaving the compound that day, and the reason was fairly obvious. I shouldn't say, maybe I should withdraw it. You know, there were obvious reasons to be concerned.

Q Beyond it being the anniversary of 9/11?

A I -- well, what I can say is that before I made this trip, I was very concerned. I did not have the same level of anxiety about what might happen to us on the previous trips. And the reason that we -- this is important from our perspective, the reason that we made the trip was that there was quite a bit of pressure to sign this agreement, which had been put into -- you know, it had taken a year or two of very hard work to put together, and I certainly believed in that, but it was very -- looking at the number of incidents, and I was particularly concerned about the kidnapping of the medical workers. But, you know, I can elaborate on my own thinking about it, but I was very concerned about this trip.

Q So what happened after you had what you have described as this odd conversation with the medical director? What did you do?

A I went up to the third floor, where our rooms were, and related this to my colleague, and the co-founder of the group, and we were concerned, to say the least, and probably -- we had a conversation about what we should do, and based on my thinking, was it something that was going on at the compound. I didn't want to make things more complicated by calling into an unknown situation. We discussed whether, you know, whether I should make another call or not, and decided that I should, so I called back and I got the same -- I believe it was the same person who I was speaking with before, and all I can say is, it sounded like he wished somebody else was on the line.

Q I anticipate it was a short conversation, but to the best of your ability, could you relate for us that conversation?

A Yeah. I believe what happened was, you know, essentially, things were -- it wasn't -- it wasn't a long exchange, obviously, and I wanted to get off -- it was clear that -- sort of this pregnant pause. They said, look, we are under attack, and I believe there was an ~~explanation~~ ^{expletive} there.

And then a pause, another pause, and we don't know exactly what's happening, something like -- there was something similar, but it wasn't -- I don't remember. That part didn't stick with me. And I did not want to prolong the conversation.

Q Was there any request for assistance for you to do anything, to call anyone to --

A No. I think once he realized who it was, it was clear there was nothing I could do, so the call just ended.

Q Okay. So you had called the number that was associated with this security agent. Is that correct?

A That's correct.

Q Okay. Did you have the Ambassador's cell phone number?

A I did.

Q Okay. Did you try and call it?

A I couldn't -- I still couldn't use my phone. Oddly, it started working maybe 2 hours later. But my colleague had his and we worked -- as before, all of the calls went through his phone.

Q Did you try and call the Ambassador's cell phone number?

A We did not.

Q Okay. At any time that evening, did you try and call the Ambassador's cell phone number?

A No. We, you know, we did not think that was going to be helpful.

Q Okay. From your location at the Tibesti Hotel, were you able to hear any remnants of an attack? Were you able to monitor it on local television or social media? I guess, how did you get any additional information that evening, if you did?

A We were in pretty regular contact through the night with the head of the -- director of the hospital. So he was relaying us information which he was getting from the military command there.

Q Was that normal in Benghazi? That the director of the medical center would get information from the military or were they related in some way? Or can you explain to us that relationship?

A It was very well. I am assuming, I don't know, but I don't know if it was any personal relationship, but obviously, the Benghazi Medical Center was the key facility in the city, and the director of the hospital was a very well-connected person.

Q Was the director of the hospital concerned that the hospital might be attacked?

A He didn't -- if he had such concerns, he did not relate them to us.

Q Taking a step back, did he have more general concerns about the various militias that were operating in and around Benghazi and the security of the hospital? Had that been a problem in the past, I guess?

A Yes. He was the target of an attack which nearly killed him several months before, and that was clearly hostility, various forms of -- I mean, you know, at the time, the various militias were going after public services, airports, hospitals, other assets as bargaining chips, among other things.

So that Benghazi Medical Center had been in the tussle with the local authorities, as well as, you know, the various issues that were in place at the time.

Q Was this widespread or was that hospital being targeted by a particular group, either militia, or any other type of extremist group?

A Well, the situation there at the time was not extremely well-known, and much of my information, you know, came from after. So

yeah, it was not a household thing at that point. Wanis Bukhamada, who was the head of the Thunderbolt forces, the special forces that were assigned, and originally had been with Qadhafi, and had been moved to -- reassembled and supported into, I guess they were -- they had Benghazi as the base, were switched to the rebel side, and the commander of that route around this time, May, June of 2011, became the head of the, basically, the de facto head of the Benghazi military, you know, Benghazi security as well.

Q You gave us a name just a minute ago. What was that name again, please?

A Wanis, Colonel Wanis Bukhamada.

Q Bukhamada?

A I have -- there are various spellings of it. B-u, space, Khamada would be K-h-a-m-a-d-a.

Q Okay. All right, you mentioned Ansar al-Sharia just a moment ago. What was its status in and around Benghazi at this time?

A It had been understood to be present, and there was some general, you know, but it was not a ~~hostile~~ -- it was not a name that came up as frequently as it obviously did afterward. It was some, I had spoken to some senior, or former senior U.N. advisors after that who had speculated that that group had been in charge of -- at least partly in charge of the -- had taken partial control of the area around BMC, the Benghazi Medical Center, but I had heard several different reports that they were or were not at the time.

Q Okay. All right, if we could go sort of back to the

timeline. You had gotten the call from the director at the Benghazi Medical Center. You had called back to the compound, had a very brief conversation with one of the agents, and then, I think, we were at that point. What did you do next, or what did you learn next?

A Okay. So at that point, it was clear there was an attack underway, so I went up to, again, back to the third floor to consult with my colleague. And at that point, we were talking, and we heard the volleys of RPG, what we assumed and later confirmed were RPG fire. It clearly was a big firefight. And I remember his turning to me and saying, Well, that's not good.

Q Okay. You said that it was clear there was an attack underway. Let me take a step back in your prior conversations, either with Ambassador Stevens or with the agent that day. At any time, had the protests in Cairo come up in conversation?

A No.

Q Okay. Were you aware that there had been protests in Cairo that day?

A I had -- actually we were not at the time, no.

Q Okay. So that is something that you learned afterwards?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Let me just pause for a moment because we have approached the first hour. And, I mean, I have maybe another 20 minutes or so. I just want to continue though the narrative. We are going to talk just briefly about timing. Dr. Chorin, do you need a break?

A I could take one if you need me to, but I don't need one.
Ms. Sachsman Grooms. I think it is fine if you want to keep going.

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q Well, then I tell you what. I'm going to continue on for maybe just another 15 minutes just to see if we can sort of walk through the rest of that night and the next day. And then I will be close to -- I will either be finished or close to being finished with all of my questions.

A Great.

Q So if you could just continue your narrative of, I believe you said it was clear there was an attack underway.

Let me ask you this: Had you had any indication from social media in Benghazi or anything that there was to be some sort of protest at the Consulate, or anywhere in Benghazi that day?

A No.

Q Okay. Is that something that you would monitor when you were in Benghazi?

A You know, that is actually not reliable, and also not working, so, you know, in the past, we generally relied on our human contacts, not social media.

Q Okay. And had any of your contacts told you that there was to be any type of protest or demonstration in Benghazi that evening?

A Nope.

Q Okay. All right then. If you could just continue and walk us through what happened the rest of that evening with respect to your

knowledge as to the attack at the U.S. facility?

A So after the -- after the explosion, we called the -- we called the director back, and it was clear he was getting -- he had a direct line to the individuals I mentioned earlier. And we had various -- we had conversations amongst ourselves what to do, whether the Tibesti might be under attack. We tried to, we found our third colleague and informed him what was going on. And I spent some time, basically, in -- my room was facing the front part of the hotel. My colleague's was facing the back. We -- I turned off the lights in my room and tried to watch what was going on outside. There were lots of pickup trucks and armed individuals milling around, and this happened all throughout the night. There was just very unusual behavior outside our hotel.

So, there was a police car that left the Tibesti shortly after the conversation that I just mentioned, which concerned me, because it was -- not that ^{it} ~~I~~ was going to do anything, but that was the only visible sign of some authority we might recognize. So we had asked that through the director, that the -- that more -- if they could send somebody, and what do they advise us to do?

Then around 2:00 o'clock in the morning, 1 or 2, things still were -- there was a lot of activity outside of the hotel, and at that point, there was some, I believe it was around then that the -- that we heard that there was a casualty, or more, at the mission, and there was a question of whether we were going to be evacuated, and by whom. And I think the, at the time, if I recall -- well, that was it.

They were basically trying to -- the director was trying to assure us that somebody was keeping an eye out for us, and that if there were any problems, that they would come and take us to a safe place.

So, I obviously didn't sleep the rest of the night. And around, I believe somewhere between 6:30, maybe 7, maybe 7 o'clock in the morning, the director came to the hotel and we sat for about half an hour and -- 20 minutes. And I did not realize -- obviously, that he knew that Ambassador Stevens had been killed, but that did not come out until towards the end of the conversation.

And ^{he} ~~it~~ looked very grave. And there was some question about what, you know, what the next steps were going to be. This was mainly with me, and he decided that -- we decided that that is going to be it, for us to be taken to the hospital, mostly because that was on the way to the airport. Do you want me to keep going on this?

Q Yeah. Had the director given you information about Ambassador Stevens at that 7 a.m. meeting?

A Yes. But it came at the end.

Q At the end of the conversation?

A Right.

Q And what did the director relate?

A He said that there was a -- there was -- there were casualties, and obviously, he was well aware of what had been going on all night. And at one point, he used the past tense with respect to Ambassador Stevens. That's when I tried to clarify, and he said, yes, that's the case.

Q Okay. Had he treated Ambassador Stevens or was that another physician?

A That was another physician. I am absolutely sure that he was kept up to date by the minute. But --

Q Did the director relate who he had heard was responsible for the attack?

A No.

Q Were you -- let me take a step back. Were you aware that there was a second U.S. Government facility in Benghazi?

A Not directly. But I would, you know, I had some vague -- I think I had some vague notion that there was.

Q Okay. You had never been there?

A I had never been there.

Q Okay. So during that evening, you were, essentially, relying on the Libyans for your personal security that evening? There was, you know, no one to call, no other place to go for U.S. citizens to go and, essentially, self-evacuate yourself that evening?

A No. We were very much relying on the director, and the --

Q So, then what happens after your visit with the director in the early morning of the 12th?

A So I told our -- there were three of us, so I -- given that we had been through this drill once before after the killing of the Colonel Younis, likely -- you know, to get our essentials ^{and go to} ~~into~~ the hospital. So I asked everyone to please get their essentials and the director drove us to the hospital.

Q Did the director have some sort of security surrounding him?

A At that time, no.

Q Okay. And what happened once you arrived at the hospital?

A There was a lot of -- there was, well, there was commotion. We were in the director's office. There were physicians who -- can you hear me?

Q Yes.

A The physician who treated -- at least one of them who treated Ambassador Stevens was there, and spoke with the general -- person, and we got a more detailed brief on what had happened.

Q And what did you learn?

A Certainly, that he had been brought to the hospital nonresponsive, and I wasn't a part of that briefing. Dr. [REDACTED], who was the -- was our third there, but his colleague had left the previous day. So I had heard about the struggle over -- the security people had come to try to take Ambassador Stevens' remains back -- to evacuate and -- but there was some sort of an, I believe there was some sort of an arms tussle, and that there were other militia members who had been brought to the hospital that night. Whether they were militia members, rather, who had been brought -- the identity of them, those people was not quite clear, but there was some violence associated with that.

And I will tell you what else --

Q Did they relate who brought Ambassador Stevens' body to the hospital?

A It was not totally clear. There's the question of the translator, whether it was Stevens' translator who had aligned with the people who brought Stevens. There's some speculation about that, but we didn't get any further details.

Q Okay, and do you know who his translator was? Did you -- had you ever met the person?

A No.

Q Okay.

A I don't think so.

Q Does the name [REDACTED], is that familiar to you?

A Yes. But I couldn't tell you more.

Q Good. Is that a name that you associate with Ambassador Stevens' translator, or are we referring to a different person?

A I cannot definitively associate it with Ambassador Stevens, but I would -- yeah.

Q Okay. So your associate, Dr. [REDACTED], received the information from the treating physician as to the condition of Ambassador Stevens as being brought in nonresponsive, and any other medical assistance that was rendered to him that night. Is that correct?

A Yes. He certainly got more information than we did. We were, obviously, only focusing on the logistics of how we were going to get out of there.

Q Okay. But your basic understanding is that Ambassador Stevens was brought in nonresponsive and they were unable to revive

him?

A That is correct.

Q Okay.

[3:26 p.m.]

BY MS. JACKSON:

Q To your knowledge, was any other American brought to the hospital?

A That was not my [inaudible] --

Q I am sorry, what was your answer?

A That was not -- we were not privy to that information. Nothing was discussed.

Q So no one else was talked about other than Ambassador Stevens?

A No.

Q And then you have described that there was some sort of skirmish or tussle over when people arrived to take Ambassador Stevens' remains away. Could you elaborate on that, please?

A The precise details I do not recall. I remember there was some -- my recollection is that there was some tussle over the jurisdiction, not only as to who was coming to take Ambassador Stevens away and who was authorized to release him, but I can't be completely sure. There were also apparently tussles with threats around militia. It was only referred to as militia members who were brought in at the same time and treated and what was happening. Some of them were, I believe, deceased. So the question of who was in control of admitting and discharging.

Q During the day of the 12th, did you learn anything more about the nature of the attack, the scope of the attack, the identity of the

attackers?

A We did not.

Q Following the 12th, did you learn any more about the nature of the attack or the identity of the attackers?

A Well, I had read quite a fair bit after the attack and heard more information about what had happened, how we got out, as well as some of the circumstances around the fact itself.

Q From your Libyan sources, did you learn any more about the identity of the attackers as opposed to reading news articles and more public information?

A I had discussions with other people who were proximate, but not Libyan.

Q And what did you learn?

A I believe that I had written about this at one point, but there were two individuals who were -- one was the Italian consul general, was having dinner near the compound -- my understanding was there was a restaurant next to the compound, the Venezia restaurant -- and was waiting for Ambassador Stevens to come and meet with him at that restaurant. He related to me what he told an Italian, I believe, news aggregator right after the attack.

Q And what was that?

A That he did not believe there was any cause to -- he did not see any evidence of -- he did not -- there is a written record. He said that he did not have any cause to believe that there was a protest.

Q And how soon after the attack did he give this interview, if you will, was his rendition of what happened made public? Was it the next day, the day after?

A The next day. And it appeared both -- it also appeared in an Italian newspaper, but I do not recall the name of the paper right now.

Q So the Italian consul general's eyewitness account was in the papers on the 12th or the 13th?

A I believe it was the -- the dateline was the 12th. One interview I think was carried, I am not 100 percent sure, I think it was carried by an Italian -- major Italian paper the next day.

Q And, Dr. Chorin, how did you get out of Benghazi after the attack?

A So the director -- essentially the director asked, well, whether we wanted to leave, and I said: Yes, very much so. I was concerned that there might be some kind of counter-action from outside or within. And he managed -- we were taken to -- we had to go back into town. There was a passport that was left behind. And we were driven by the director, followed by a team, a group of militia members who -- essentially, they followed us and provided an escort to the airport.

Q And do you know which militia that was? There were several in Benghazi.

A Yes. This was described as a security force that was sort of by the Benghazi Medical Center as an unaffiliated militia. I think

that potentially -- the various parties had multiple affiliations, so we couldn't quite tell who they were. My view is that they either -- well, they played a role in getting us out, so that is all I can say.

Q And you were grateful?

A Yes. Well, I was grateful to get out.

Q Yes, okay. And then did you leave Benghazi on the 12th?

A We left Benghazi on the 12th. I don't know how much of this you would like to hear, but there was a problem with the incoming flight. It had some mechanical problems in Istanbul, and they sent a smaller plane, so there was no way to get us on the flight. And I'm not even sure, I think the flight was completely booked even before that. So we heard later that there were various efforts made on our behalf that were fairly dramatic to get us on the plane. We were basically left standing there while the plane was fueled and loaded wondering whether we were going to get on.

Q But you ultimately did?

A Yes.

Q Have you been back to Benghazi since then?

A No.

Q You wrote in an article that was published in the New York Times on September 13th, 2012, that -- and the quote is, quote: "It is a mystery at this point why the consulate compound was so lightly fortified," end quote.

First of all, did you write that?

A Yes.

Q Could you elaborate on what you meant by the compound being lightly fortified? In your mind, in what respects was it lightly fortified?

A Well, this was from -- now, as you know, the editing process is -- I'm sure I said that, but I think the conclusion that I was making was an extrapolation from -- partly extrapolation from past experience and partly from bits I had heard here and there. And thirdly, it was from the fact that -- I think a combination of the information I had received from the, you know, the conversations that I have already related with Stevens and his detail, as well as the fact that it succeeded. I mean, I was quite aware of the provisional -- that it was not a consulate, that it was a mission, and I had seen those facilities before during my posting.

Q In fact, when you were in Tripoli in 2004 to 2006, was your facility one that, for whatever reasons, was not required to meet security standards?

A It was a provisional -- I mean, it was a liaison office, so it was neither an embassy nor a consulate, it was a temporary mission before the normalization of relations. And I believe I have said this publicly before, but I felt personally, and I know a number of my colleagues did, that the security was essentially nonexistent, other than that provided by the -- I shouldn't say nonexistent because, of course, there were dedicated State Department security people there, but we had no -- it was nothing like a normal embassy.

Q Dr. Chorin, just so that I can wrap up, which has been more than my first hour, about an hour and 25 minutes, is there anything else about the time period of September 10th through September 13th that we haven't asked you about that you could relate to us? I understand there is probably a myriad of details, but have we overlooked any significant event, conversation that comes to your mind?

A Well, I have been -- since this started, I have wanted to not dive into any partisan issues, so I hope you will allow me to say that. I think this is a very complicated issue, and I certainly have spent a long time looking at from a number of angles what happened not only to us individually and to Ambassador Stevens, but also from the perspective of what possibly could have been done differently.

And I would stress that, as we touched on just before, that I do think that this is probably a very -- it has certainly been remarked upon before, but I think the security stance or arrangements for provisional facilities, that was clearly a big issue.

But the bigger issue here was one we started out talking about with regards to what kinds of needs specifically Libya would require after the intervention to be a functioning and secure entity.

And I would like to say that I think Libya has had a range of very specific needs that relate to its nature and the nature of the regime that was deposed and that the U.S. Government -- I would hope that the U.S. Government would invest more resources in understanding the situation as it existed before the revolution and since.

Q Dr. Chorin, is there anything that you think that the U.S.

Government should have done in late 2011 and the first half of 2012 that could have prevented or at least mitigated the downward spiral that Benghazi went into?

A I believe that -- and, of course, I wasn't in a position to make any decisions or have anything close to the full range of information. You know, I think -- I have said many times before that I thought that the intervention was the right thing to do at the time and that it was a courageous moment in an otherwise very chaotic environment, but that we, the United States Government, the United States had an obligation to follow through in terms of the support that was offered to the Libyans afterward.

And I think that there a lot of -- a number of officials and prominent analysts have said that the Libyans themselves didn't have the capacity to accept assistance, which to some degree I believe I agree with, but I think that there was a window right after the cessation of the first wave of hostilities something could have been done in terms of at least stabilizing Benghazi.

Another mistake that was made, and this one was largely by the Special Transitional Council, was to move the operating capital from Benghazi to Tripoli as soon as it did. I think there was opposition to that decision, but I think that that opened up the whole range of other -- it left Benghazi exposed and it created a situation where one had a multitude of supplicants, essentially heavily armed supplicants in Tripoli fighting over resources, and that was the dynamic that evolved.

I think that if one looks at the report, that that was one of the founding documents, that the "responsibility to protect" doctrine, there is a whole talk there about what should be done after such interventions of this kind. And some of the basic descriptions there, I think, were very applicable to Libya.

And I think also that the situation in Libya is unique with respect to Islamist presence there and its history with respect to, say, Tunisia, Algeria, and particularly Egypt, and that those differences could have worked in the favor of the stabilization.

But the fact that there was -- I am fully aware of all the difficulties that relate to providing assistance in that kind of a context and what was going on regionally, but I strongly believe that regardless of the Libyans' own painful, traumatic previous experience under Qadhafi and the underlying divisions -- tribal, geographic, otherwise -- I think the point is that hopefully something can be done now to address this.

I have some ideas, I have expressed them, but I think some of the degree of what we have been facing now and what happened with Ambassador Stevens could have, obviously with hindsight, been mitigated. But I don't think that that veers against the initial instinct as in I think it was a good -- I think it was a positive decision to go in if we had the commitment to follow up.

Q All right. Well, Dr. Chorin, thank you on behalf of myself and my colleague who is here. Thank you for your candid answers to our questions today. I am going to turn it over to my minority

colleagues, unless you would like to take a short break. Otherwise, I think they are prepared to continue through.

And please, just on behalf of everyone that is here and this whole committee, we are very sorry for the loss of your friend, Ambassador Stevens, and please accept our condolences on that.

Would you like a short break or would you like to continue?

A I am okay.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. O'BRIEN:

Q So this is Erin O'Brien speaking for the minority staff. First of all, just like our colleague expressed, we want to say thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. We don't have a lot of questions from our side, but a few that we are going to take you through.

So my first question, have you ever actually been to the Special Mission Compound in Benghazi, actually seen it?

A I believe we drove by at one point, but I have not been inside or -- I have not been inside.

Q So your description about the consulate being lightly fortified, you gave us a couple of reasons, you know, it sort of being an extrapolation from experience and other things. But just to make sure that we understood, it wasn't based on your firsthand experience with the compound?

A No, it was not.

Q All right. Thanks for clearing that up.

You spoke to us a bit about the day following the attack. And I wanted to read a piece from a September 13th, 2012, New York Times article that we had spoken of before. In that you wrote, quote: "The morning after the attack on the consulate, my colleagues and I returned to the medical center, where we witnessed an outpouring of sadness and, as one physician put it, shame," end quote.

Could you talk to us a little bit more about the reactions of the Libyans that you encountered?

A There was quite a strong sense of shock among many of the people. Certainly the Benghazi Medical Center staff and the members of the community that we interacted with outside that, that was fairly limited. But at the airport, it was at the airport or the people who were not hospital staff who were present.

Q At the hospital itself, were there a lot of people there? Were there Libyans there after hearing the news? Or was this just in your conversations with the hospital staff?

A Well, there were a number of -- mainly the hospital staff. There were, as I mentioned before, people who had treated Stevens. And there was high emotional content. The codirector of the hospital who was from a very prominent Benghazi family of activists, one of whom was Salwa Bugaighis, who I believe had met with Stevens that day. These were all people who were on the same page and knew Ambassador Stevens or had met with him several times before that, probably multiple times before that.

Q How would you describe their emotions, were they upset, were

they angry, was it a combination?

A It was a combination.

Q What was it they would be angry about?

A I think at the time that this was going to be stage two in the recognition that there were forces at work in Benghazi that were trying to destabilize the city and kick its supporters and partisans out. This had been going on for several months at that point.

BY MS. SACHSMAN GROOMS:

Q This is Susanne Grooms. I had a couple of follow-ups from Sharon's exceptionally long question -- no, exceptional questions.

I think you talked about a specific conversation that you had had with Ambassador Stevens while he was in D.C. waiting to be confirmed and sort of a series of other conversations that you had with him via email, right, but not speaking conversations. My impression was that you don't recall the exact words of any of those conversations. Is that right?

A I think it would be hard for me to try to remember the conversations verbatim or any exact wording.

Q But the general gist it sounded to me of those conversations, and sort of what I have from my notes is that Ambassador Stevens was talking about the importance of and your shared interest in keeping a unified Libya, secure Libya, stabilized Libya, and ensuring that the U.S. Government and other entities work together on that front. Is that sort of an accurate summary?

A Yes. There was a definite tone of frustration and feeling

that he was under a tremendous amount of pressure. That came through very clearly.

Q Who did Ambassador Stevens feel that he had pressure from?

A I think he was quite balanced also in terms of expressing that pressure was coming from -- well, I think the major thing was that he felt, and that it was very clear, that it had to do a lot with very limited resources, and he felt that there should be much more resources. And he hoped that those would be forthcoming, and he felt that part of his job would be to -- and he hoped he could do this -- was to convince various arms of the U.S. Government to put more resources into stabilization and disarmament and all the rest of it. Those two words were I am sure in there.

Q Was one of those arms of the U.S. Government the Congress?

A Yes.

Q That he was trying to build a case to get resources for the stabilization from?

A Yes.

Q In those conversations with you, it sounded to me like they were -- and tell me if this is a fair characterization -- but they were about how to improve the security and the overall stability of the infrastructure of Libya itself and not so much about his own personal concerns about his own personal security going in and out of Libya. Is that accurate?

A Yes and no. I think he was clearly being careful about what he was -- to some degree. And I think there was a bit of a lower barrier

because we had gone over the ground rules of what was going to be -- you know, this was in the context of a somewhat formal-slash-informal interview, and I needed to clarify what the rules were.

I mean, we had this prior relationship, connection, correspondence, et cetera, so a lot didn't need to be said. I am trying to answer your question as best I can.

He did not specifically talk about his personal security. He did talk about the general climate and the fact that it was getting worse, and it was clear from his body language and what he said and how he said it that he was under pressure.

Q I am sorry, under pressure from who, about what?

A Under pressure as in it is a very complicated situation, it is clearly a dangerous situation, and he doesn't have all of the resources that he feels that he needs to make the difference that he wanted to as a representative of the U.S. Government.

Q I thought that is what we had discussed in terms of all of Libya, right, like he wanted to improve Libya. I think specifically my question is, did he say anything specifically about his own personal concerns about his personal safety?

A Not directly.

Q So he didn't say, like, "I am trying to reach out --"

A He did express concerns about Benghazi.

Q He expressed concerns about the security situation overall in the city of Benghazi?

A Yes.

Q But not his personal security as in, "I am going to Benghazi and I am afraid to go to Benghazi"?

A No.

Q Did he tell you ever that he -- I guess at this point he might not have done it -- but did he tell you that he was trying to get more, like, DS agents to come support the facility in Benghazi or the facility in Tripoli?

A No. There was no reason for him to mention those details to me. No. This was all in the context of my main questions, as well as the personal, you know, "How are things going, what do you think?" on a personal level.

But I was at the time focused very much on the dynamics in Benghazi, and his view, as expressed then, was that Benghazi was very important as to how things were going to unravel in a country as a whole. There was no discussion specifically of his own individual security.

Q Did he feel like remaining as a U.S. presence in Benghazi and the things that he personally was going to go do in Libya, were those his attempts to essentially help stabilize Libya and prevent that sort of turning point where things could go badly?

A I'm sorry, I didn't hear the last part.

Q I'm sorry. Is it sort of fair to understand that he understood his going to Libya, the decision to extend the presence in Benghazi after they opened up in Tripoli, but the decision to stay in Benghazi as sort of him trying to prevent that point where Libya could go badly and destabilize? Was he trying to have an impact on the

situation?

A Whether he stated explicitly that or the thrust of the argument was that it was very important to shore up the -- to have a U.S. presence in Benghazi? In which conversation? In the conversation in Washington or subsequent conversations?

Q In any of your conversations with him.

A Yes. Well, he made it clear that he felt that it was very important to have a U.S. presence in Benghazi.

Q And the reason for that was in part this specific concern, right, that he wanted to try and keep Benghazi from destabilizing and he felt the U.S. presence in Benghazi would help that?

A Yes.

Q I think you have written about this a little bit, but did you see the -- was there essentially an impact in itself to the attack and the death of Ambassador Stevens on the destabilization in Benghazi, like, how would you describe -- his death itself became sort of a, to some extent, a turning point in the destabilization of Benghazi, is that sort of an accurate understanding of your writing?

A Yes. I think that was a critical, critical point, and I believe that that was intentional, as well as being highly ironic and tragic.

Q And did you -- this is just on a slightly different subject -- but did you say that when you talked to the Italian consul general that he told you that he had been expecting Ambassador Stevens on September 11th to come join him at the restaurant?

A I actually tried to get him to clarify this at one point. He had said that he was -- that Stevens had a long meeting scheduled that evening and was going to meet with him very early on the morning of the 12th. Whether that meant 1 o'clock in the morning or 5 o'clock in the morning, my understanding was that he was in the restaurant at the time, and when the noise -- when the commotion -- you know, the sudden attack occurred, he went out and tried to ascertain what was going on. And the second was the case of another person who was -- there was at least one other person in the vicinity who we talked to later who said the same thing.

Q Did he indicate to you that his plan was to meet Ambassador Stevens at the restaurant or at some other place?

A That is what he told me, that he was waiting -- that he was expecting -- he waiting in the restaurant for him.

Q Okay. So he was sort of sitting in the restaurant waiting for Ambassador Stevens to come. It is not clear to you how long he was planning on waiting, maybe all night?

A Right. That is possible. I don't know why he -- I can't say any more about that. But, yes, at the time of the attack, he was in the restaurant waiting for Stevens.

BY MS. O'BRIEN:

Q What I am going to do now -- and again, this is Erin O'Brien -- just to close out our questions for today, and this is something that we do with everyone that we interview, as you know there are a number of public allegations that have been made related to the

attacks on Benghazi. What I am going to be asking for here is not your opinion, but just whether or not you have firsthand information of these allegations. If you do not, we will simply just move on to the next allegation. There are about a dozen or so of these. I am reading from script. It usually takes us a couple of minutes. So please just bear with us.

All right. The first one. It has been alleged that Secretary of State Clinton intentionally blocked military action on the night of the attacks. One Congressman has speculated that, quote, "Secretary Clinton told Leon Panetta to stand down," end quote, and this resulted in the Defense Department not sending more assets to help in Benghazi.

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

A No.

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

A No.

Q It has been alleged that Secretary Clinton personally signed an April 2012 cable denying security to Libya. The Washington Post Fact Checker evaluated this claim and gave it four Pinnochios, its highest award for false claims.

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

A No.

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

A No.

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

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

A No.

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

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

A No.

Q Do you have any evidence that the U.S. facilities in

Benghazi were being used to facilitate weapons transfers from Libya to Syria or to any other foreign country? Hello?

A Yes, actually, if you could define --

Q I can reread it. Just let me know if you ever need me to reread it.

A Well, if you could -- does that mean evidence that's not in the public domain?

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Yes. So what we are looking for is personal knowledge, any personal knowledge from the things that you --

Mr. Chorin. I just wanted to clarify.

Ms. Sachsman Grooms. Yes, not from reading a news report.

BY MS. O'BRIEN.

Q Do you need me to reread the question?

A Yes.

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

A No.

Q A team of CIA security personnel was temporarily delayed from departing the Annex to assist the Special Mission Compound, and there have been a number of allegations about the cause of and the appropriateness of that delay. The House Intelligence Committee issued a bipartisan report concluding that the team was not ordered to stand down, but that instead there were tactical disagreements on the ground over how quickly to depart.

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

A No.

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

A No.

Q A concern has been raised by one individual that in the course of producing documents to the Accountability Review Board damaging documents may have been removed or scrubbed out of that production.

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

A No.

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

A No.

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

Do you have any evidence that anyone at the State Department

removed or scrubbed damaging documents from the materials that were provided to Congress?

A No.

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

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

A No.

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

A No.

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

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

A No.

Q It has been alleged that the President of the United States was, quote, "virtually AWOL as Commander in Chief," end quote, on the

night of the attacks and that he was, quote, "missing in action," end quote.

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

A No.

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

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

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

A No.

Q All right. This is our last one. We are almost done.

It has been alleged that the military failed to deploy assets on the night of the attacks that would have saved lives. However, former

Republican Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon, the former chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, conducted a review of the attacks, after which he stated, quote, "Given where the troops were, how quickly the thing all happened, and how quickly it dissipated, we probably couldn't have done more than we did," end quote.

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

A No.

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

A No.

Q Okay. And with that, we are finished, and I believe our other colleagues are finished as well.

Ms. Jackson. We are finished.

Again, Dr. Chorin, thank you very much for your time. It is, I believe, after 8 p.m. your time in London. Is that correct?

Mr. Chorin. After 9.

Ms. Jackson. After 9 p.m.? It has been 2 hours we have been doing this. But, again, thank you very much.

Mr. Evers. This is Austin Evers from the State Department. Ethan, if you would like to call, feel free, or you are absolutely free to take the rest of the night off.

[Whereupon, at 4:15 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

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

Witness Name

Date

Errata Sheet

Select Committee on Benghazi

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

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>LINE</u>	<u>ALL CORRECTIONS MADE BY WITNESS</u>
8	11	Replaced "the History of the Libyan Revolution" with "A History of the Libyan Revolution."
10	7	Deleted "or" before "he certainly came after I did."
12	11	Replaced "an abatement in the tension" with "an abatement in attention."
24	12	Replaced "we thought" with "he thought," in reference to Ambassador Stevens.
25	15	Replaced "straight" with "straightforward."
29	17	Replaced "explanation" with "expletive."
32	18	Deleted "hostile."
35	16	Replaced "I" with "it."
36	10	Replaced "it" with "he."
37	23	Replaced "into" with "and go to."