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Classification Key:

UNCLASSIFIED

[REDACTED]

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: BRIGADIER GENERAL SCOTT ZOBRIST

Wednesday, March 12, 2014

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-301,  
Capitol Visitor Center, commencing at 10:12 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]

ARI [REDACTED] We'll go on the record.

So good morning. This is a transcribed interview of Brigadier General Scott Zobrist.

Welcome and thank you, General, for coming today. Those in the room have already introduced themselves and a record of our proceedings will show who was in attendance today. However, for the record, again,

ARI I am [REDACTED], and I am a professional staff member for 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 attacks on the U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya, in 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 the lessons learned.

I am joined today by colleagues representing the chairman and ranking minority members of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Armed Services. In order to simplify our proceedings, I am making these introductory remarks and will start the questioning, but please understand that this interview is an equal and joint effort of both committees.

We will proceed in the following way. I and a representative of the other committee's chairman will ask questions for the first hour,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

then representatives of the ranking minority 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.

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 a clarification. In such instance, usually the most efficient way to do that is to do it as we proceed rather than at the end.

Because obviously the transcriptionist cannot record gestures, we ask that you answer orally. And 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 answer.

We hope to proceed methodically and generally chronologically this morning. Some of our questions might appear to be basic, but that's 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 our questions based upon your best recollections, and please provide classified information to the greatest extent possible.

OR2 [REDACTED] Unclassified.

ARI [REDACTED] Unclassified information to the greatest extent

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

possible.

If it is necessary to provide classified information in response to questions, everyone in this room, in this facility, is cleared to top secret, and therefore you should not hesitate to provide relevant information or details up to that classification level.

Furthermore, if the question is unclear or if you're uncertain in your response, please let us know. If you do not know or remember 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?

General Zobrist. I do.

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

General Zobrist. No, I will be able to do that.

**ARI** [REDACTED] Pursuant to an 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 this document. The Department has also agreed to return the original transcript to the committees, along with a second version that includes only secret information.

In conducting this work and evaluating the transcripts, the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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.

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

General Zobrist. No, they have not.

**ARI** [REDACTED] Finally, I note that you are accompanied by an attorney from the Department of Defense. I ask the <sup>DoD</sup>~~DoD~~ counsel, for the record, please state your name.

Mr. Richards. Edward Richards.

**ARI** [REDACTED] And with these preliminary remarks concluded, General, do you have any introductory remarks that you wish to make.

General Zobrist. No, I do not. I'm at your disposal.

**ARI** [REDACTED] Fine. And does your counsel have introductory remarks?

Mr. Richards. I just want to reiterate that this is a top secret interview, and the transcript should be considered top secret in its entirety until an expedited security review can be performed by the Department once requested by the committees. That's all.

**ARI** [REDACTED] Thank you.

The clock now reads 10:15. So I will start the first hour of questions from the representatives of the committee chairmen, Armed Services and Oversight Committee chairmen.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

EXAMINATION

ARI BY [REDACTED]

Q General, could you tell us what your rank and position is presently?

A I am Brigadier General Scott Zobrist. I'm the Director of Plans, Programs and Requirements at Air Combat Command at Langley Air Force Base.

Q And, General, are you a fighter pilot?

A I'm an airman, and I am a fighter pilot also.

Q And what type of aircraft do you qualify to fly?

A I am an F-16 pilot, and that's the only fighter that I've flown throughout my career, most blocks of the F-16.

Q And how many hours have you accumulated?

A Roughly 2,500 or so.

Q Thank you. And on September 11, 2012, what was your position?

A My position at that time was the wing commander of the 31st Fighter Wing at Aviano. I was also the installation commander at Aviano Air Base in northern Italy.

Q And what were the dates that you held that position?

A The dates that I held that position, approximately April of '11 to June of 2013. I'm sorry I don't recall the exact dates.

Q No, that's fine. That's fine. Thank you.

And could you describe for us briefly your command reporting relationship? To whom did you report in that position?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Yes. I am, as the 31st Fighter Wing commander, I was subordinate to the 3rd Air Force commander. And the 3rd Air Force commander reported to the commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe. And at some point during my tour, USAFE, or U.S. Air Forces in Europe, also picked up another role of AFAFRICA, Air Forces Africa. And so by this time I believe that that had occurred.

So the command chain was from me to the 3rd Air Force commander on up to the four-star Air Force commander at what we call USAFE headquarters, which also had an AFAFRICA role.

Q So you think or you're certain that you had the Africa role on 9/11?

A To be honest with you, I can't recall. I know that it was in the transition period. I believe it had been completed. So we knew that we had responsibilities because even before that point there is a shared responsibility that -- we were forces in Europe that as Africa Command stood up we knew that we could potentially have a tasking elsewhere, and in fact we had significant tasking over [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. I'm sorry that I don't remember the exact dates.

Q No, that's --

A It was something that we didn't -- when it occurred we transitioned, and I believe it actually had occurred.

Q Sure. So that's fair. So let's play that either way then. So before that transition occurred, describe to me the relationship of the fighter wing with the Africa -- AFRICOM before the formal

[REDACTED]



transition.

A Really was no change from one to the other, quite honestly. The four star at U.S. Air Forces in Europe and subsequently Air Forces Africa was in my chain of command and the only four star in my chain of command. He was the air component to both of the combatant commanders, the European Command and Africa Command commanders. So that was the entry point into the air component.

So at this point I'm fairly -- to the best of my recollection, we were actually AFRICA, as well as USAFE at that point.

Q Okay.

A So there really was no difference. The tasking would come into the four star. Before, say several years before, we would still get tasked through the same mechanism, through 3rd Air Force and their combined air op center there, but the tasking would come from outside. For instance, if we were going to support any other command it would have to come through at that point European Command into the USAFE command and then down to us.

Q And I think you said that regardless of when this transition was, there in fact were taskings that came down to you?

A In fact, there were taskings for many different commands. We supported Central Command taskings routinely. We supported European Command. We had gone on building partner capacity taskings into Africa on many of my three tours at Aviano, throughout the '90s, 2000, and beyond.

Q And had you personally ever been to the AFRICOM AOR while

[REDACTED]

in that position, TDY or --

A Not during this -- not to the best of my recollection during this tour.

Q Had you been in the AFRICOM AOR before that?

A Yes. Yes, I have.

Q Can you describe in a general sense the nature of your travels?

A I can. I was in Tunisia as a captain when we went on -- we didn't call it BPC or building partner capacity then, but it was engagement. We took a, I believe, a six-ship contingent of F-16s and all the associated personnel to Tunisia to fly with their F-5s. And that was in the '95 to '97 timeframe.

I had also traveled around throughout my tours both at Aviano and elsewhere. I've served in Afghanistan, I've served in -- over Iraq flying out of Al Udeid. And on Capstone or general officer, 1-month preparation course, my trip was actually to Africa. So I went to Senegal, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Djibouti, as well as AFRICOM headquarters. And that was in July of 2012. So approximately several months before the Benghazi incident.

Q So you did Capstone course --

A While I was in command at Aviano.

Q Okay. I see. Fine. And when you were at Aviano, can you describe any formal or informal relationship that the command had with NATO air units, either maybe colocated at Aviano or elsewhere in NATO?

A Yes, I can. Aviano is the American name for Pagliano e

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Gori. It's the Italian air base there that is commonly known as Aviano. So, legally, it's, and by international agreement, it's an Italian air base and they control it. [REDACTED]

They have been extraordinarily helpful in all our dealings with them locally, but they have no forces there that are aviation forces themselves. They are all support forces. So they run the air base force and protect the perimeter of the base. We run all the internal workings of the base minus a few areas that they have. Occasionally, they would have aircraft from Italy that would cycle through, or NATO aircraft would cycle through there as well. However, there were no routine deployments of Italian forces there at Aviano. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In terms of any specific relation with another base or -- we didn't routinely train with them, quite honestly. We had our own -- there was so limited time, very limited time to train because we would be deployed, come back, everyone at PCS, all the new guys would come in and we would cycle through this upgrade mill, if you will, to get people ready to go to the next deployment or prepare for the next contingency. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that there was very little opportunity for the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

nights to have training, which would be to fly against the Tornados or the other aircraft that the Italians might have.

Q So that was my next question. The Italians have Tornados?

A They do.

Q And do you know where they are home based?

A I know that they have some at [REDACTED], which was the closest, and in its [REDACTED] is [REDACTED]. And it's very close to Aviano. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Sure.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

They do have other aircraft stationed throughout. To be honest with you, I have not thought about it in a while and I don't recall where they are all stationed. And again, we operated mostly in the north.

[REDACTED]

Q And again, you don't know necessarily where they were stationed or how they operated because your responsibilities didn't include being familiar with that necessarily.

A That is true. We had very little interaction with them. Not that we avoided it, but there was no requirement to, and we lived in our own world supporting the other contingencies around the world. We would train with them when we could. But just due to the ranges involved, even to get to southern Italy,

We could try to meet in some airspace in between, but it was very difficult to do. Funding and resourcing was always a limitation as well. So --

Q Sorry. The Italian planning and resourcing or --

A Both, quite honestly, both. So we in the '90s, for instance, we would go to Duchi Momano and train. It was a NATO training location. And we would fly with other NATO nations down there. It was very expensive, and we really could no longer afford to do that. So we -- nor did our OTEMPO, operational tempo always allow that. So we tended to trained more just from home station.

Q I see. Thank you. I'm going to ask you a little bit more about that in just a second.

So turning now again to your responsibilities as wing commander. I understood you to say you were dual hatted both as the base commander and the wing commander.

A That is correct.

Q So let me ask you now about your responsibilities on the

[REDACTED]

wing commander side. How many airplanes were in the wing at Aviano?

A At Aviano, we had two squadrons of 21 primary-assigned F-16s each. The 555th Fighter Squadron and the 510th Fighter Squadron were our two squadrons. And that's the iron, of course. And as you know, there's -- the real guts of the operation, the hardest parts of the operation is the huge support that goes along with that. So all of Aviano, basically 3,800 or so active duty airmen all supported those two -- those two squadrons' worth of airplanes, operators, and maintainers, and their associated aircraft maintenance units. As well as we had an air control squadron there, the 603rd Air Control Squadron was still active at that time.

There was an Army -- there is an Army mission that we support there from Vicenza, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q And again, you're speaking about those [REDACTED], that was your base commander hat, your familiarity with those was from your base commander hat, not your --

A Right. They were not under my command.

Q Right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A But my responsibility was to support them as a dual-hatted role.

Q Sure. And give me some idea, of the 3,800 personnel, you obviously said there's pilots, there's maintainers, air controllers. What's the approximate breakdown of that 3,800? In rough terms, what are we talking about?

A With the 21 primary assigned aircraft, you'd have roughly 30 pilots assigned to that squadron, just under that, more around 28 or so to meet the 1.5 crew ratio per airplane, plus an operations officer and a commander. And then on top of those roughly 60 squadron-assigned pilots, you'd have another 20 to 30 in the OPS support squadron and the wing staff. Myself, I was qualified. And so maybe 100 or so of the entire 3,800 were the pilots for the aircraft.

The air control squadron was roughly 20 -- excuse me, 250 to 300 people, and they controlled the tactical radars and operated the tactical radars that would provide the tactical air picture. They would control us when we were operating and training there in Italy. They also had a very aggressive deployment schedule, kind of a one-to-one deployment ratio where they were cycling in and out of the desert.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I did mention that the Italians controlled the perimeter of the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

base. That was their job. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Right.

A And then, of course, with 3,800 Active Duty personnel comes lots of civilians, lots of local national employees, roughly 600 local national employees also worked there at Aviano, and the family members, roughly 4,000 or so family members. So I consider our community at Aviano to be 8,000 to 9,000 people at any given time.

Q Thank you. That's very helpful.

So now again I want to talk about the fighter wing in particular, and I'm going to ask you about what might typically occur. And I understand that maybe there's nothing typical, and so that's a fair answer, that it might be hard to categorize something as standard or normal.

But let's just say in July or August of 2012, during a weekday, during business hours, so to speak, how many of the F-16s would be airborne?

A At any given time our flying schedule for the day -- if I may, I'll start with that.

Q Sure.

A The flying schedule for the day would be what we would call a 10 turn 8. So we would have roughly 12 aircraft for each squadron. Each squadron would have 12 aircraft available to fly, maybe 13 or 14, but it would depend. And they would have a schedule to fly 10 lines,

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

so 10 missions would go out. And they'd come back after roughly an hour-and-a-half mission, total. And then they would be turned, as we call it, preparing them to fly again. And then eight would go off the next time.

So on a typical day, you'd have each squadron flying 18 total missions for a total of about 36 for the day.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q And am I correct to understand these typically would occur, say, during what we in the civilian world would call the business day, 8 to 5?

A Yes, sir, they would. Well, not necessarily 8 to 5. But our business day was maybe a little bit longer. But the aircraft -- we typically would be allowed to fly starting at 8 and ending at 10 in the evening would be the end of the day. We had unique night-training requirements for night-vision goggles and things along those lines. And that would drive us to maybe shift the flying schedule later in the day. Maybe we'd start flying at noon and the first 10 would fly

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

during the day, then after darkness the next 8 would fly to log night-training squares, night-training requirements.

Q And how late would a night-training requirement day typically go? If you started later, when would you end, typically?

A Typically, we'd always be on the ground by midnight.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Sure. And did any of these sorties that we've discussed, either the daytime or the nighttime, ever involve air refueling?

A Yes, occasionally. Because there are no aerial refueling capabilities in Italy, they would deploy in for us to train with them. Quite often, a Guard or Reserve airplane would come from the States and spend 2 weeks. Very difficult to get that type of training. So we didn't have a lot of air refueling assets in theater. So when they were there, it was a rare opportunity. And, yes, we would go out and get air refueling capability training, excuse me, so that we could keep our currency for air refueling should we ever need to.

We had a requirement every X number of days to get air refueling. If you did not get that, which happened quite often, where we were not able to keep our currency in air refueling, the next time a tanker would come in we would have to send an instructor pilot on the wing of the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

person to re-accomplish their currency.

Q Sure. So I think you've indicated this, the tankers, the availability of tankers was such that sometimes you missed your proficiency standard because they weren't available.

A Yes, sir.

Q Where were the -- were tankers assigned to U.S. Air Forces Europe?

A Yes, tankers were the assigned to U.S. Air Forces Europe in Mildenhall. And the number I don't remember. But occasionally they would help us out <sup>25</sup> well. But they were heavily tasked on a daily basis with real-world missions, if you will, supporting contingency operations around the world.

They did have an allocation of training missions because they had training requirements as well, and those would be allocated. So occasionally we would -- occasionally, they would actually fly down and meet us in the airspace south of our location and they would tank us, tank with us, and then they'd fly back home.

Q But I understand, then, your answer, though, is that because they were so tasked, you often found yourself relying on Guard or Reserve units coming in for the proficiency training because the Mildenhall tankers were otherwise engaged?

A I would characterize it this way: that the tanker force in general, it's a limited commodity. And I don't know that we tasked one component heavier than the other, because the Guard and Reserve, as you know, are an absolutely critical part of everything we do. But

[REDACTED]

occasionally we would have Guard and Reserve, and occasionally we would have the Active Duty folks, tankers from Mildenhall.

What I didn't see was all the Active Duty and Reserve and Guard real-world missions that they were doing. I know for a fact that -- it would be unfair to the Guard and Reserve to say that they came over and just did us while the Active Duty guys were doing the real-world missions. I don't think I could characterize it that way, because there's a -- the Guard and Reserve were doing exactly the same thing.

Q Sure. Agreed. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to suggest that. But I understand your distinction, and I agree.

A Suffice it to say, though, that the tanker resources are a limited asset. And whenever we could get access to them, we would get as much training as we could with them.

Q I see. Thank you.

So similarly, the training and proficiency sorties that flew from Aviano, were they often, periodically, occasionally controlled by AWACS and airborne battle management systems?

A Rarely were they controlled by AWACS. Often they were controlled by our 603rd Air Control Squadron at Aviano. And occasionally we would train with the Italians. They had some equivalent of air control squadrons that would control us. But --

Q Sorry. Airborne Italian control squadrons?

A No.

Q I see.

A Similar -- more similar to the -- they had a radar

capability similar to what our 603rd Air Control Squadron had on the ground.

Q I see. And how about live fire training of fighters based at Aviano, could the planes at Aviano conduct live fire training from Aviano? Which is to say, could you take off for the coordinates --

A Yes.

Q -- fly directly someplace to a range and return?

A Yes. We had the ability for training munitions, not live munitions, for training munitions, inert munitions, where we could fly. And there was a range that over the years, with a lot of work, we were able to utilize a range in Slovenia and also one in Croatia, and Slunj range, S-l-u-n-j, was the range in Croatia.

We could also fly up to Grafenwohr, in Germany, although tankers were typically required. But we did participate in joint training with the Army up there occasionally.

It took a lot of coordination with the Italians in order to establish those routes, as you can imagine. Just like Americans would be sensitive to flying with types of ordnance overhead, the Italians were sensitive to that as well. And we worked through those and were able to establish routings, very specific routes that would allow that type of training. There was no opportunity to fly live and drop live weapons in Italy or outside any of the other ranges around Italy, by the time I left. That may have changed since I left in the summer of 2013.

That said, we have routinely flown with live ordnance out of

[REDACTED]

Aviano and out of all the bases in Italy through the multiple contingency operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, you name it. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Significant coordination did occur, though, to get approval, then there were certain routes that we had to fly that were deconflicted.

Q So thank you. In a minute, I'm going to ask you, time permitting, about some of those routes and some of the procedures for flying live. But before I do that, I want to ask you one other question about the aircraft in the fighter wing at Aviano.

So I'm familiar for a variety of reasons with the Cold War military posture that the United States and NATO allies assumed during the Cold War. I know what "strip alert" means, and so forth.

Were any of the aircraft at either of the fighter wings kept on strip alert at Aviano?

A No. We were in a [REDACTED] all the way up until September 12th, quite honestly. To the best of my recollection, we had never stood up during my time there, in '11, '12, and '13, any type of [REDACTED]. So it was a [REDACTED], and with that goes a whole host of [REDACTED] configurations, manpower considerations, et cetera.

Q So that's very helpful. So not only was there not a strip alert, but there [REDACTED] or something of that nature, you were in a [REDACTED] the entire time?

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

Q And was that to deploy and fight on the other end, which is to say, so to deploy with soup to nuts, everything you needed to arrive at an assigned location and fight from there?

A But not on the aircraft. [REDACTED]

Q And would you, under those provisions, fly to a place with munitions prepositioned or munitions would follow or move contemporaneous?

A [REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

They were almost always kept in a non-built-up configuration, i.e., separated by components, the bomb body itself, the fin kit, the fusing, any seeker units that go on it. They would all be kept separate, partly because the bomb functionality can change, depending on what we're tasked. The bomb itself can have a lot of different things strapped on it and it becomes something different, either it could be what we call a dumb bomb, unguided, or it could have a GPS guidance unit strapped on the nose of it and then it becomes a smart bomb with the same bomb body that was built in the '70s.

Q Sure.

A And all those were kept in a, for the most part, a non-built-up configuration. Notably, also, the air-to-air missiles, with which we would always fly, the A-120s and the AIM-9s that we would fly, A-I-M is AIM. They are kept in a non-built-up configuration for the most part as well.

So there's a build-up time that goes along with each of those munitions. And we do that also for shelf life because if it's built

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

up, you have a different shelf life on the component as well. And it also changes, when you put a fuse in there, it changes some of the net explosive weight considerations. So we can store more munitions separately.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q So that's helpful. But jumping ahead for a second, you don't have any -- or maybe I should ask it in an affirmative way. Is your recollection in September of 2012 of the munitions storage area lacking any particular type of weapon?

A Not to my knowledge it was lacking anything. But on any given day, we didn't have them built up, ready to go when we are in our normal training posture. And that was the case throughout that summer.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Correct.

Q -- needed something additional. But there were no particular, to your recollection, no particular lack of a particular weapon.

A No, sir, there was not.

Q So again in a generic sense, if one were to arm an F-16, and I don't know mean with an inert weapon, but I mean with a built-up weapon, weapons, as you described, help me understand that process. First of all, you have to have authorization to do so, correct?

A Correct.

Q You have to have the availability of armers.

A Yes.

Q That is, personnel trained and equipped to do so.

A Correct.

Q The planes themselves have to be available and fitted with racks to carry whatever munitions that are going to be carried?

A That is correct.

Q As you said, there must be a decision about what type of weapons are needed specifically and then those weapons must be assembled.

A Yes.

Q Then the assembled weapons must be fitted to the racks on the plane.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Correct.

Q What's that process take? Not the authorization part, but from the time the authorization is given, let's assume the availability of an airplane, let's not necessarily assume the availability of an armer, unless there's always armers on duty, what's that process take?

A The maintainers, our maintainers have their technical orders that lay out the entire process for arming an F-16, building it up to a certain configuration. Now, it may come from different technical orders, but when you stack all the different job steps that must be done from one end to the other, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

If things are done in parallel and things are done expeditiously, if we leave racks on the airplanes -- and right now I'm sure Aviano has done some of these things, which we did in the aftermath of September 11th in order to lean as far forward, and it had an impact. But there are some things that you can do, is what I'm saying, that can help you get a little bit ahead, but there's a cost associated with those.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On the back end of it, now you've just started ground operations. The inspection piece from the pilot, that can go fairly rapidly, depending. And then you've got the ground operations, roughly an hour. And then departure and transit time to wherever you're going to go, et cetera, et cetera.

[REDACTED] And I think it's important to note that some of the things cannot really be shortcut.

[REDACTED]

As you can imagine, if you have pieces and components that have not been on the airplane in a while and you start putting them on the

[REDACTED]

airplane, first of all, they all have to have functional checks done. So to the casual observer who is not familiar with it -- I mean, everything is always more complicated. I mean, your job is more complicated than I realize that it is, I'm sure.

Q You don't know the half of it.

A I know. And I'm not sure I do want to know. But you know what I'm saying.

Q I do.

A I believe, sir, that there's a lot of things that go into it.

And so we know how long each one takes. That's assuming everything goes well. When everyone is working together, we can shorten that time a little bit.

[REDACTED]

Again, there are some things you can do to expedite that with planning ahead of time, and I'll gladly go into that if you like, but there are costs that go along with that.

Q You don't mean financial costs, you mean performance costs?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Performance costs.

Q So what is a performance cost?

A So some of the things that we have done as we fine tune our procedures was we -- some of the larger time-consuming steps in our process involved the hanging of the racks, as we call them, the AME, aircraft maintenance equipment, I believe, it's the suspension equipment. And that takes a long time because you have to get it out, get it made on the airplane, and your functional check, which means you hook up lots of electronic gear, ensure that all of the different pieces and parts are functioning the way they're supposed to.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And we've done that over -- as the new normal started up, basically the following day, we shortened all those procedures and did everything we could.

Now, what are the costs, back to your question, what are the costs associated with that? They are -- there's wear and tear on the equipment and there's some limitations on the training. Because you want to load up two fuel tanks in order to go into combat, you're going

[REDACTED]





[REDACTED]

Q In the ways that you've described.

A In the way I described. Previous to that, there was no -- it was only a hindrance if we had done that because there was no tasking nor any benefit for us. In fact, it was a detriment to our training, and our focus was on we're actually in an inspection that started on around the 9th of September. And it was a NATO inspection -- well, it was a U.S. inspection to meet U.S. and NATO inspection requirements. And so there was no -- nothing special done to prepare the airplanes or whatnot prior to September 11th. It was all after September 11th that we began the thought process to put all those things in place.

Q And am I to understand, among other things -- we'll talk about this I think maybe in a bit -- but among other things, because you had this impending inspection, which was to the training --

A Correct.

Q -- efficiencies, training standards.

A In fact, the inspection was a 2-week -- the inspection had been in place, scheduled for approximately a year. It was the first inspection of the -- in USAFE of the Air Force's new inspection construct, where we spend more time inspecting ourselves with oversight from the higher headquarters inspection team.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Correct. Correct.

Q There were discussions --

A And, in fact, the only -- on September 11th, our aircraft were -- we were kind of in the admin phase of the inspection, and all of our aircraft were in a true training configuration because we had to start from that cold start. We knew we were going to get tasked next week, and we weren't allowed to lean forward. We wanted to prove that we could do it from a cold start along the timelines that we said that we could do.

Q So in other words, so I understand this, so for instance had some aircraft been fitted with AMEs then, that might have been considered a jump start on your inspection; in other words, it would have been not a fair start.

A Yes, correct.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q So you were, for maybe a couple different reasons, you specifically were holding to that training configuration.

A Believe me, our maintenance personnel wanted to get as much ahead of the game as possible because it shortens their workload. But we held to the rules.

And so, basically, the airplanes in the flight line looked like any other day. A lot of them had two tanks, a lot of them had one tank. And that's significant again because you have to put the two tanks on all the jets that are going to be going into combat. So on any given day, prior to September 11th, before or during the inspection, the aircraft would have looked -- the flight line would have looked basically the same. No specific [REDACTED]

Q Sure.

A -- none of that would have been preloaded.

AR1 [REDACTED] Very helpful.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q Yeah, before, the first hour, I just wanted to step back for a second, you mentioned that the 31st Fighter Wing supported in some way operations in Libya. I'm just wondering if you could elaborate on that.

And also I just wanted to acknowledge that some of this, I think my understanding is that [REDACTED] at least may have ended and transitioned to [REDACTED] on or about [REDACTED], which would have predated your coming in.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED] I don't know exactly why, I can't explain this to you. But we would have been -- we would have had been chopped to NATO in order to go do these missions. So we would chop a three ship at a time to go do some leaflet bomb missions. And then they'd come back and come back over to transfer from NATO back to U.S. -- [REDACTED]

Q I'm sorry. For the record, that's because while [REDACTED] was a U.S. command operation, [REDACTED] was NATO command.

A Correct. That's my understanding. And that is a fact that that was the case. And so it made sense to me that we would chop them over and they would fly those missions on behalf of NATO, under the command and control of NATO.

Q So, this is very basic, but so just to maybe recap, you said that [REDACTED] 31st Fighter Wing was involved. Do you know how many, roughly, the aircraft of the 31st Fighter Wing would have been involved -- [REDACTED]

A I know those squadrons ended up flying some. But, I'm sorry, I don't recall the numbers. [REDACTED]

Q And then in the early phases of [REDACTED] would it be about the same number of aircraft? Say, when you came on board at Aviano, was the 31st Fighter Wing still engaging in combat missions supporting -- [REDACTED]

A As I recall we were scaling down, had significantly scaled down at that point. [REDACTED]

Q Okay. And then once it transitioned to fully NATO sort of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

led mission --

A Right.

Q -- 31st Fighter Wing stood down from combat operation. Is that your recollection?

A Yes. That is accurate with a few exceptions where we --

Q As you mentioned --

A -- chopped them over --

Q Right.

A -- and flew.

Q And then one other question. You mentioned earlier that 31st Fighter Wing was on a training posture until 12 September of 2012 and that in your time that had been the case consistently.

I was curious, during the time period when 31st Fighter Wing was supporting [REDACTED], flying combat missions, were you also in training status then or was that a different status?

A I'm thinking to make sure that there weren't some caveats there.

Q Sure.

A The wing was going back to a normal training posture, and the best that I can recall is that we had no jets on any kind of alert status or anything like that. Any type of alert was handled by the forces that were chopped to NATO, the block 50s, the F-16 block 50s, the C jets, the Prowlers and the Growlers. They were the ones really flying the operations.

So I don't recall any time where we were on any type of alert or

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

heightened posture other than where we took the -- where we volunteered to go fly those leaflet missions so that the other guys could keep doing what they were doing.

What was happening, maybe not pertinent, but it was significant because it freed up more combat capability, they were taking the NATO forces and downloading them, and up and down, all the munitions and the suspension equipment, it was an incredibly inefficient operation. And then they have to reload it all up after they drop their leaflet bombs, and they've missed the ability to have combat effectiveness with those lost sorties. So we said, hey, we'll do the grunt work, you guys do the fun stuff, since we're not allowed to do it.

But that was the only time that I can recall where we changed our status, if you will, from a training posture.

[REDACTED]

RPTS MCCONNELL

DCMN ROSEN

[11:08 a.m.]

OPQ BY [REDACTED]

Q Okay, and that was when you chopped over to NATO?

A Correct.

Q So just to be clear, and forgive me if this procedure your timeframe, as being wing commander, that's fine, but prior to that timeframe that we are talking about where elements of 31st Fighter Wing were chopped over to NATO for the leaflet mission, for example.

Earlier on [REDACTED] and to your knowledge, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] were the units of the 31st Fighter Wing on a training posture during those combat operations? Were they on alert posture or was there some sort of middle posture between training and alert that they would have been on, to your knowledge?

A To my knowledge, they were either combat, or training during the initial part [REDACTED] I believe that again, this is -- I was not there.

Q Understood.

A But I think they threw everything in the wing at them because we didn't know what was going to happen. So I think we generated every airplane we could generate, and we wanted to have the entire force. And again, I don't know what the tasking was. They may have tasked. I suspect they tasked them to generate everything we got.

Q Yeah.

A [REDACTED]

Q Okay, that's all, thank you.

ARI [REDACTED] I think it is a good time to break. Take a break.  
[Discussion off of the record.]

OD2 [REDACTED] It is 11:20. We can go back on the record. General  
Zobrist, I would like to take the opportunity again to thank you for  
your service and for being with us today. I know you had to take time  
out of your schedule. You had to travel up here. We really appreciate  
your time and attention to this matter.

OD2  
My name is [REDACTED]. I'm with the minority staff of the  
Oversight Government Reform Committee, and I'm joined by my colleagues  
here to my left that are also from the Oversight Committee and the Armed  
Services Committee. I will let them introduce themselves to you. I  
think they already did once, but I will do it for the record.

OD3 [REDACTED] OD3 with the Oversight Committee.  
AD2 [REDACTED] AD2, with the Armed Services Committee.  
OD1 [REDACTED] OD1 with the Oversight Committee.  
OD2 [REDACTED] OD2 So during our hour, I will do most of the  
questioning, but I think my colleagues will also jump in and also ask

[REDACTED]

some questions as well.

Certainly, our intent is to also establish a record, so I may ask you some questions that either have already been touched on in part, or may seem redundant. Again, that is -- we mean no disrespect in that regard. Again, we are just trying to get a clear record.

General Zobrist. I understand, sir, thank you.

EXAMINATION

CD2 BY [REDACTED]

Q On the night of the attack, can you just briefly describe where you were and what you were doing?

A The evening of the attack, I was at home, and to be honest with you, I can't recall specifically what I was doing that evening, other than we were in the middle of an inspection, as I had discussed previously, and so I believe I was aware that there was -- I was aware previously that there was some activities in Egypt that were of concern and I also -- but we were focused on what was going on in our wing.

We had no warning order, or tasking, or anything along those lines that would deviate us from our current mission that we were on.

And in fact, the next morning I woke up and I went to work, met with the Inspector General team for the morning meeting, and then transitioned to the day's activities. So during that morning my awareness was that I do recall looking at CNN.com, and seeing that there was an attack in Benghazi.\* Specifically what that report said, and my recollection of it is kind of fuzzy at this point, but it seemed logical that there was more activity in the region and we often keep

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

an eye down that way. But again, due to the distances involved and our current tasking, we were focused on the mission at hand.

Q Okay, thank you. And, sir, I'm going to ask you a very broad question, and I want you to take as much time as you need to answer it. General, some have suggested that the U.S. should have been able to scramble planes from someplace in Europe or elsewhere to respond to the attacks that occurred in Benghazi.

Can you walk us through why it would have been difficult to respond to the unfolding attacks in Benghazi from Aviano?

A Could you repeat the first part? I missed the general part.

Q Some have wondered why we could not respond from Europe, or specifically in this case, Aviano, and I want to give you an opportunity to walk us through why it was difficult, or what it would take to actually respond from Aviano?

A Okay, in general terms, and I will allude to some of my previous discussion. In general terms, the generation of combat air power takes a significant amount of time, and even if you are pre-postured and do as -- even on alert, the challenge is one of time, and it may be time in the tasks that you must do to prepare a fully combat-ready force to send them into combat. And there is also the time that is associated with distance, the tyranny of distance.

In my opinion, we have, unfortunately, created a perception that air power can react immediately in every situation. And in reality, that's based on some very great success of the Joint Force in 12 years of combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, and before that, 10 years with the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Air Force and Navy in the Northern Watch and Southern Watch, where the perception is that we can be overhead in 6 to 10 minutes at any given time, which is generally the timeframe in Afghanistan.

That's something that we are very proud of that we can provide our -- the coalition forces, and especially the American forces on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq, but what is often lost is all of the preparation that goes into enabling that. So with that as context and that as a perception, we can react fairly quickly, but it is not commonly known all of the steps that must go into preparing, and even then, what the risks are involved when you are going to use that force.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

What's included in that is the -- first of all, you have to recall the force. To use a night recall as an example, there is no base housing at Aviano. The only people that live on base are single airmen. So everyone lives in the community. So the ability to recall all of the forces takes a little bit more time than you might have. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So the time to bring in the force to execute, to even generate that combat air power, assuming it's the right thing for the mission, takes time. So several hours, perhaps, before the force is formed and

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

fully functional with the tools issued to the maintenance personnel, the fuel and the fuel trucks, all of the things that are a challenge. The weapons, meantime, are being built up, and those take, you know, a long time, [REDACTED] depending on the type of weapon that you may be building. So a lot of things go in motion, but the precursor to all that is set by bringing in the force which, again, is a little bit more challenging in the housing situation that we had at Italy -- in Italy.

Once the generation begins, the command element is on the phone with higher headquarters getting what our tasking actually would be, if it is even ascertained at that time, if they know exactly what it would be. Because we put the wheels in motion, look across the enterprise, ensure that it's -- that there are no gaps or shortfalls, or things that need to be adjusted from a leadership perspective, and then we are looking at a slightly bigger picture to try to ensure we know what the tasking is going to be, so we can ensure that the intelligence is there because I don't want to send out my air crew without proper intelligence to the battlefield. That can make things even worse.

We need to make sure that all of the weapons are the proper weapons for the mission, that they be fused properly, that we have got the right communication networks for any command and control discussions or any communications with those on the ground. There is different radio frequencies and different cryptological keys that are used and those all have to be coordinated and ensured that any other forces, either

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

from NATO or U.S. are all -- that that is all covered; and to understand what the situation is on the ground or in the air, wherever we may be tasked to go.

So if you put all of that together, you take 3 -- let's call it 3 hours to assemble the force and actually start turning wrenches on the flight line,

[REDACTED] and it's ready to accept a pilot, then an hour, minimum, of ground operations, of inspection time, rather, by the pilot roughly and then an hour of ground operations, you're looking at -- I will let you do the math

[REDACTED] really, before you could get anybody airborne. And that is assuming that it's -- that we know where we are going.

What I didn't mention is the coordination with the host nation. As you know, our allies in Italy, we have got signed agreements. They are some of our closest allies. Since I'm on the record, I will say that I don't think that the Italians get as much credit as they deserve for all of the support they have given us. They have had [REDACTED] soldiers and airmen in heart and [REDACTED] for the [REDACTED] almost, and sometimes we forget that.

I personally have had pilots fly overhead and support them in combat operations. They are our neighbors. There is an organization that was nearby, they supported us. They made [REDACTED] they made [REDACTED] happen. They really deserve a lot of credit for that.

But as with any governmental agency, there's some coordination that is required. So going from a cold start is a bit of a challenge

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

because the Minister of Defense is going to want to know if something is going on as what our Secretary of Defense, and certainly the President, if any of our allies in our Nation were going to do something unusual.

So the coordination element of this is not insignificant either. While we had flown operations to the same general area in the past, we had not done it recently, and it's a whole separate coordination process to enable that.

So that coordination would need to be done, routes would need to be planned. The distances involved to the north part of Africa from the north part of Italy where we operated from was roughly 1,000 miles. The distance from D.C. to Kansas City. D.C. to KC is the way I think about it.

That would require roughly two air refuelings. Again, a significant amount of planning goes into, if you are planning on the gas station being there when you are down below an eighth of a tank, it had better be there when you are driving a car, and the same goes for forward combat operations.

So a significant amount of planning would need to go into getting a tanker in that area as well. And I think our tendency is to look at some of the things we had done in the past in [REDACTED] and those were significant operations, but they also had a significant amount of planning and effort that went into them.

So in addition to assembling the force, building the airplanes, generating the airplanes, the ground operations time, the transit time

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

of 2 hours plus air refueling time in there, the coordination to get the airplanes even airborne in the first place with approval from our Italian allies, who I'm confident would approve, and I can tell you some stories about how they did support our operations later if you are interested.

We were optimistic that we would get that approval, but again, there was work that needed to be done and time that would need to be spent. The transit time, and then that's all assuming that where you are going is going to be a mission that's useful that you can accomplish and be effective at.

Q We will get to that in a second.

A Before I'm going to send, as a commander, I have some authority, and I'm expected to use my judgment and give my best military advice to my commanders up the chain on what we can and can not do, and what we should and should not do with regard to the situation on the ground, the amount of planning. It is operational risk management at any given time.

It would be a significant challenge to generate all of that and have enough awareness of what is going on on the ground to send the pilots out the door in a no-notice situation like this to go execute an armed mission or unarmed mission, over another country's airspace without significant risk being taken. And the risk is a factor for the commander, all the way up the chain, to the AFRICOM commander, and the European Command Commander, depending on which AOR we might be talking about. Because it may appear that putting aircraft on station

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

would be the right thing to do, even if you could do it with that amount of time, if you can accept the amount of time that it takes to get there, but then there's still risk involved.

You have to look at the environment. For instance, I know that should we be able to -- had we been able to do all of that in a situation where we were able to get airplanes airborne and overhead, a scenario like Benghazi, I would be hard-pressed to push my airmen out the door not knowing the situation on the ground, not knowing who they are going to talk to, are they -- do we even have the right communication set because this is no notice. There was no pre-coordination. It is not in our mission tasking to do it. So it would be -- a lot of things would be done on the fly and these things would have risk.

In general, while there would be a lot of things against the scenario, against the airmen of the scenario that we are talking about. It is an urban environment that we are talking about. It is night. There is no one to talk to on the ground that we are aware of. We don't have any ability during the transit time of 2 hours to really get battlefield updates.

There is some satellite communication that could help facilitate that, but very little awareness on the ground. So it is a very different animal than what we had in the well-orchestrated and planned [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] operations, and unfortunately, I think that there's some negative transfer from one to the other.

Q Okay. So General, Admiral Mullen was part of the Accountability Review Board that conducted post-Benghazi. And our

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
committee interviewed him as part of the investigation into the attacks and in the course of our interview -- and I'm going to make this Exhibit 1.

[Zobrist Exhibit No. 1 was marked for identification.]

ODD BY [REDACTED]

Q Here is what he told us. This quote is in there. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

I think you have already answered this question. But I will ask it for the record. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A I have never seen this statement, but I agree.

Q Okay.

A I agree with Admiral Mullen.

Q [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Q Okay. And I want to introduce a second exhibit for the

[REDACTED]

record.

[Zobrist Exhibit No. 2  
was marked for identification.]

OD2 BY [REDACTED]

Q It was at a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 7th, 2013. General Martin Dempsey. General Martin Dempsey, the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was asked a similar question about whether we could have deployed F-16s from Aviano Air Base in Italy. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Yes, I agree.

Q Okay, and we made reference to the issue of aircraft being on strip alert. For the record, again, can you walk us through what it means to be on strip alert, and then also talk about why those jets were not on strip alert, and how common it was to either have them on strip alert or not have them on strip alert?

A I can only answer the why partly because, again, I'm at the tactical level. I'm a wing commander, but I do know that there was no tasking that required us to go to a heightened level of alert. And

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

in fact, we had routine taskings that we had to fill in support of our Nation's other Combatant Commanders that required us to train. So training was our focus unless we were given other tasking. There was no NATO or U.S. commitment at that time that required us to be on any kind of alert with the exception of some of the previous -- at the end during [REDACTED] some of the change in status of our aircraft was simply to meet specific mission taskings. There was no fleet-wide alert or anything like that. [REDACTED]

In terms of what is the definition of strip alert, I will just refer to it as alert, and there are a variety of alerts that alert postures that can be assumed, and typically, they have a number of minutes or hours associated with them. And the most rapid alert that you will ever see, would be an alert assumed -- alert posture assumed by probably aircraft [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] where they are -- they have a couple of different levels, but it be in the ready room, the jets what we call cocked and ready to go, everything has been done on it. You hop in it, throw the switch, and a couple of minutes later you are taxiing.

There are other heightened levels where you may actually be in the cockpit just waiting to throw the switch. It cuts out 3 to 4 minutes of transit time out to the airplane to throw in your gear. But of course, that was not a player here.

More in line with what you would see in a European or Africa scenario is, you would see maybe a 1-hour alert or a 3-hour alert, or a 6-hour alert; somewhere along those lines. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

That means, again, the jet is cocked, everything is ready to go. The pilot just needs to get to the airplane, flip the switches, do the ground operations, taxi out, take off. Meanwhile, the machine behind him is working all of the clearances, which have been hopefully pre-coordinated in order to facilitate that 1-hour launch to go to where they are going.

A 3-hour posture would be more of a posture that would -- you would have jets ready, but maybe everyone wouldn't be in the squadron, and you could even do that from home, for instance, where you have to get airborne in 3 hours. That would allow you to get alerted. In fact, I have been on 3-hour alert in Aviano as a captain and I did get alerted. I came in and we were airborne within that 3-hour period.

That's what most people would call, those are the -- that's the variety of strip alerts that you will see, and again, all of that involves, first of all, getting to the point where backing up a second, doing all of the process to generate the aircraft, load the weapons, ensure you have got the battlefield intelligence, and the ROE, the Rules of Engagement, the special instructions, so that when the pilot throws the switch to start the engine, they know exactly what they are doing when they are going to take off.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

That's all done before you can assume any kind of alert posture. And then it is just a matter of how quickly do you need them to get in the air? One thing to consider here also, is depending on where your support assets are, may drive whether or not you are on one status or the other. For instance, me at Aviano being on a 1-hour alert status, was excessive and unnecessary if the tankers were coming out of Mildenhall and they were also on a 1-hour status because they have an hour-and-a-half transit time to get to where we would refuel, maybe 2 hours, so they would, the command authority above us, they would combine their op center with balance. Our alert posture is based on that. So just another consideration there when you consider the concept of strip alert.

Q Okay. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And then he says: "Second, Senator, importantly, it was the wrong tool for the job."

And I want to ask you what he means by saying that "it was the wrong tool for the job."

A Well, I don't want to put words in the chairman's mouth,

[REDACTED]



but --

Q Let me just ask you directly. Would an F-16 have been a useful tool for the job of responding to the attacks in Benghazi, or would there be inherent limitations to using that platform?

A There would be significant limitations to using the platform. The military commanders have a wealth of tools available to them, and an F-16, despite all of its capability, not just an F-16 but fighter aviation has some significant limitations in the case of a Benghazi scenario. Given what I know about it, assuming that we could have even gotten there in time, and assuming that we would have generated enough intelligence in the area where the commanders would have felt comfortable sending out their pilots to not make a bad situation get worse.

For instance, if they got shot down because we didn't understand that there were a SAM threat out there, that would significantly complicate an already bad situation, and divert very scarce resources and attention from the primary mission, which my understanding was to, the hostage rescue, and/or exfiltration, eventually. It could complicate that significantly by having another downed -- to have a downed aircraft in the area.

Being it's an urban environment, there is very little that you can do kinetically that will affect the situation in a positive way. In Afghanistan, and Iraq, as I mentioned before, we can respond very rapidly because those aircraft are ready on station. They are airborne. They are waiting. That is the most heightened strip alert

[REDACTED]

there is when the strip is 20 miles behind you and you are already in the air. That's why we can respond that way. Months of training went into that moment, when they hit the, what we call the pickle button to release the ordinance. And in the moments before they release any ordinance, they have an entire list of things that they need to -- the pilots, and any ground controllers need to do to ensure that the weapon is going to have the intended effect and will not have collateral damage.

So in a scenario that is an urban environment, that is inherently very risky to do. Our weapons have, we have 500 and 2,000 pound weapons. We would be carrying, typically, in a close-air support scenario, a 500-pound weapon. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. That's going to cause significant collateral damage, and so there's very limited -- you are almost overmatched for this type of scenario that it may not have the effect that you are looking for, assuming the effect is to disperse a crowd, or to provide -- to take out a vehicle in the middle of an urban environment.

The fact that it was night, the fact that there is no JTAC, or Joint Terminal Air Controller available, no one to talk to on the ground, certainly complicates the scenario as well.

In Afghanistan, for instance, we have had situations where people are screaming for help on the radio, but the pilot has got to be disciplined as he walks his way down the rules of engagement and he is doing everything he can to help that soldier, sailor, Marine, airman, coalition warrior on the ground. But if they drop the bomb and it goes

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

in the wrong place, it takes, again, a bad situation and makes it even worse. So discipline is absolutely required of our aviators and it is required of our leaders to ensure we employ the right weapon.

I personally would have a hard time sending an airman out the door without a decent awareness of the battlefield or the airspace in which they are going to go fly. And that night, I will just say that there was certainly a lot of confusion, and it was a rapidly changing environment, and we did not have a machine in place to handle this -- the pop-up event. And so I believe that, again, I don't put words in the chairman's mouth but from an F-16 pilot's perspective, based on my experience, in F-16; or F-15E or any of our other fighter aircraft, would have limited effectiveness in dispersing a crowd or in an urban environment, especially with very little awareness.

Q Okay. And can you also walk us through, with a bit more detail, what it takes to stage tanker capabilities for any mission of duration? So in the case of Aviano, to Benghazi, how would that unfold? Where would these assets come from? How would this be coordinated, and to the extent you can, talk about the time involved for the preparation on that end as well.

A Much like F-16s, preparing a tanker for deployment is -- there's some requirements that go into sending a tanker down range, or to a deployed location. To my knowledge, the preparation of the aircraft is different. We have more changes that we make to our aircraft. For the record, I'm not a KC-135 pilot, although I'm the benefactor of thousands of pounds of gas that they enable me to

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

do my mission with. But I think the changes in the aircraft are less significant than they are for us. But they have a huge package of maintenance and support personnel that got to go with it wherever they go, just like we do.

In the EUCOM, AFRICOM areas of responsibility, the tankers that are most commonly used are the ones that at Mildenhall, KC-135R models, and they have staged in various locations. They are flown out of Aviano, Pisa, Moron, Souda, Souda Bay, and other places throughout my three tours at Aviano, and other places in Italy quite honestly. But that happens only after significant planning and an entire deployment which can take days to make happen.

Can you pick up an airplane and get it to another location fairly rapidly? Depends on your definition of rapidly, but again, they have the same problem where they have got to assemble their crew, make sure the airplane is ready to go, and then get at that location. When it is there, they have the same problems that we would have. We would need munitions. They would need gas and support. Some of the locations that, in the aftermath of -- in the events that followed September 12th and beyond, Aviano and Souda Bay were both looked at as potential tanker staging bases, the idea being that if they are at Aviano, they just take off with the jets and we fly south. That is a fairly simple way to do things.

Souda Bay is not a bad place either because they may meet us in the middle and we would do a couple of refuelings there. From a planning perspective, you need to plan tank -- what we call tanker

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

tracks or locations where we will stop and get gas, and set up an orbit quite often, is what we will do if the tanker is not allowed to go along with us, and typically they won't, because four F-16s', for instance, refueling can take 15 to 20 minutes until every one is cycled through the air refueling probe.

So there is a significant amount of planning, and it also has to be done with the airspace control authorities in that area. If there is a combat operation already in place, that coordination with the civil authorities has been done. I mean, we have to remember that at this time, there was no military airspace authority controlling that airspace, and it's international airspace, some international airspace, some Italian airspace we would be flying over if we were to fly directly from Aviano to Benghazi.

So there is a not an insignificant amount of planning that would need to be done, and it's going to take some time to get the tankers into that location. I can't really comment on the specific amount of time, but I know that they would have a significant amount of support equipment and personnel that would need to stage forward in order to facilitate ongoing sustained refueling operations. And I think I will just mention one more thing, and that's that it's important to be able to get there, but it's equally important to be able to get home, too. So the refueling on the back end of any mission, or maybe even during the mission requires a significant amount of tankers and a significant amount of air refueling assets.

As an example, for missions over -- for missions over Libya, and

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] So you are talking about a sustained operation, a lot of tankers to be able to do that.

Q And sir, do you know, and this is for the record, and if you don't know, that's fine as well, but do you know where the tanker assets were on the night of the Benghazi attacks? Would you have known sort of what their configuration was and geographically where they, in fact, were?

A I would not know their configuration, and it's something higher headquarters would know and would do. But I do know that there were some tankers at Mildenhall. At any given time, there are tankers at Mildenhall and they go off and do their different missions in the U.K. -- from the U.K. The specific numbers and configuration and readiness of them I do not know.

Q Okay. I think that's all I have got on my end. Do you guys have anything else that you want to ask in this round?

All right, we can go off the record. Thank you, sir.

[REDACTED]

[Discussion off of the record.]

AR1 [REDACTED] We will go back on the record.

AR3 BY [REDACTED]

Q Hi, General, as I mentioned earlier, I'm [REDACTED] AR3  
I'm with the House Armed Services Committee. The nature of my  
questions is a more technical and clarifying set of questions rather  
than anything else. But --

A Okay.

Q You mentioned earlier in your testimony that Aviano, the  
31st Fighter Wing would fly 10 turn 8, and were on a general routine  
basis; 10 aircraft were airborne, and then come back and 8 more would  
be. What was the purpose of those missions, and why were -- why do  
you have aircraft airborne?

A Okay, our aircraft have a training -- our pilots have a  
training requirement to maintain combat mission-ready status, so they  
have a certain number of sorties per month that they would need to get  
in addition to certain types of sorties that they would need to  
complete, or perhaps even training events. For instance, air  
refueling is a, what we would call a currency. You would need to have  
done in -- I have been out of the cockpit for a little while -- but  
90 days, for instance, in order for you to go air refuel without an  
instructor pilot watching you make sure you do it right.

So the airplanes were airborne to meet those training  
requirements, that we had to meet in order to maintain combat  
mission-ready status for our pilots.

Q So you weren't out conducting NATO missions or defense missions, you were doing routine training missions on a schedule?

A Yes, that is true.

Q So what's the difference between the configuration of those aircraft and a training -- on training missions versus what you might have needed to be configured in order to respond to any sort of real-world wartime tasking?

A Okay. And it varies, of course, depending on what the tasking is. But each of the different bombs, there are different suspension equipment pieces that you need for the different types of bombs. Some are common, many are common. For instance, we have a triple ejector rack, also known as a TER, T-E-R, that you can load up two 500-pound bombs, either LGBs, or things like that, but when you get into the JDAM, the Joint Direct Attack Munitions, or GPS guided weapons, they can't be mounted on that TER, that triple ejector rack, so they developed a thing called a BIM, a bomb -- I don't know what it stands for, B-I-M.

Q So if I may.

A Sure.

Q I understand that there are different configurations that you would need --

A So what's the difference?

Q -- to go into combat. I'm asking what the difference in configuration of your aircraft were for a training mission, versus --

A Okay.



[REDACTED]

Q [REDACTED]

A Okay. The bomb suspension equipment is the main difference. There is a MAU and a BRU, or a M-A-U, for the MAU, and BRU, to drop JDAMs, those will not be on in training. The MAU maybe left in place. It is kind of a universal adapter, but it often it is dropped, meaning that we would take it down. It may or may not have rails on station 2 and 9 for the air-to-air missiles that we carry.

[REDACTED]

So those are just a few of the examples. Each one of those has an amount of time that it takes to load it up and do a functional check in addition to the transit time to bring it out. So those are some of the things that are different from the training to the combat.

Q So just teasing that out just a little bit more, you

[REDACTED]

mentioned earlier that there were inert weapons versus live weapons?

A Uh-huh.

Q Can you explain that about the difference in that configuration, and the difference between an inert weapon versus a live weapon, and why that would matter to the Italians giving you clearance to fly in a different configuration.

A Okay. I will. And first, I would like to say that rarely did we fly with training weapons, the inert weapons in Italy, because of the lack of training ranges, the limited training ranges, and the challenge of getting clearance even with the training munitions. So on a day-to-day basis, you would not see training munitions, the inert weapons uploaded on the F-16s at Aviano. Occasionally, but not often.

The difference between the training munitions and the inert weapons, and the live weapons, there is multiple -- depends on the weapon, of course, but the inert weapons are a cement body. Let's use a 500-pound demarcated 2 class weapon as an example; 500 pounds of either concrete on the inert side, or high explosive if it is a live weapon.

Beyond that, though, they are mostly the same with the fins that you would use, the -- any nose seeker kits that you would use, but of course, the inert would not have a fuse because there is no high explosives to go off, and therefore, the wiring would probably be different as well.

Q One other thing I would like to clarify is, you used the term when you were talking about the preparation for the inspection,

[REDACTED]

you used the term, fight in place?

A Uh-huh.

Q [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Okay. The typical tasking for an Air Force fighter unit, especially in the States is to deploy somewhere, and so the majority of our inspections are geared at preparing to actually deploy, then you deploy, and then you fight from wherever you deploy.

A good example would be going to Southwest Asia somewhere to Iraq or Afghanistan. At Aviano, however, while we did have that commitment, and we routinely went to the Central Command area of responsibility, we also routinely had scenarios due to the Balkans in the 1990s, and Libya also, and some other situations that developed where we would fight in place. Those are the three big ones, and when I say fight in place, we fought from home station. So we didn't need to deploy to go somewhere. We generated the aircraft there, as opposed to flying them somewhere in a configuration, generating them there. We fought in place.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It didn't make any sense to do chemical warfare training in that European environment using the scenarios we were using which were Kosovo,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Bosnia, the Libya-style of scenarios where we were fighting from our home station, and we were not necessarily being attacked.

And if we were being attacked it was being attacked not with chemicals, but with conventional mortars or something along those lines. So fighting in place would be best summarized as saying we got tasking to fly an Operation Deliberate Force, we are at Aviano, they give us the tasking, we generate in place, we get munitions. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

And the interesting piece of this is that you are also at home. So you go home and have pizza with your family after you are flying a combat mission. So it is all fought from that home station.

Q And how would the configuration of your aircraft change if you were to deploy them to a forward position and then go through the generation process? Would the aircraft be configured fully loaded with ordinance, in order to make the deployment, or is there variance in configuration?

A If I may, to use an example, I will use an example, we are going to deploy to Afghanistan, and then start fighting from Afghanistan, and I will draw the distinction so you can tell the difference between the two.

And it is basically that the configuration of the airplane is going to be the same in each of those generations up to the point where you start loading ordinance. So all of the same equipment, a lot of the same gear is going to be loaded on in terms of the suspension

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

equipment, so the bomb racks, the fuel tanks, the electronic countermeasure pods, all of those things are going to be the same. But at Aviano, in the fight-in-place scenario that I gave you, we would, meanwhile, be loading the bombs up.

In the CENTCOM example, the bombs are already in theater and are being built up by other players. We would land and we would be basically ready to go, they would slap up the weapons and off we would go.

Q The last question I have for you, and what was the reported readiness status, the defense readiness reporting system, I think you are familiar with DRRS?

A Yes, I am.

Q What was the reported readiness status of the F-16 squadrons on September 11th?

A I do not recall exactly. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] That is the best of my recollection, but I can't recall specifically what our level was at.

AR3 [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

[REDACTED]

Q — So let me just ask a couple of other preparatory questions then as we approach 9/11. I think you said on 9/11, you watched, I think you said, television and it was all about quote, activities in Egypt of concern that evening at your home quarters.

In the days before that through official channels, had you been privy to intelligence documents, materials coming across your desk, that suggested that there was a level of concern in the AFRICOM AOR of any sort?

A Not that I recall. Our intelligence team was privy to all of that information and distilling it in coordination with talking to our headquarters, as per normal. But I don't recall any specific warnings or threat indicators of a specific threat that pertained to Aviano, certainly, or pertained to tasking that we might get.

Q And maybe in your hat as the Aviano base commander, did you institute in connection with 9/11 any special force protection procedures tied to the anniversary?

A Yes, we met with the force protection team at Aviano, and I have a force protection officer that did a review, was in coordination with EUCOM, who was the mother command really in this case for us from a force protection standpoint because that is where we are physically located, and I believe that we put out some general memos that were worded appropriately for the community to just make sure that they were on guard, looking around.

We may have increased some of our random anti-terrorism measures at the base, but I don't recall specifically what those were. However,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

those things were fairly routine based on the intel that we would be getting about the local area. We also met with the local carabinieri, the CARBS, the local police, and they would coordinate with us and let us know what the threat environment was out there.

So there were no specific -- in the base commander role, we took some minor measures, but there was no special threat targeted at Aviano that was indicated by any of the intelligence that we were getting, either locally, or at a macro level at EUCOM.

Q Don't take this the wrong way, but did you convene that discussion about force protection procedures on your own authority as a commander, or were you instructed by higher authority in connection with 9/11, meet with your folks and institute a different force posture?

A To be honest with you, I don't recall. We had routinely met. There is routine meetings of the force protection working group, and we had -- we did get some correspondence from EUCOM that may have directed us to consider the following things associated with the intel that they are getting, but to be honest with you, I don't remember. It was fairly routine that we would meet the force protection working group. They had either monthly meetings, and 9/11 was always one of those events, those dates that they paid attention to in addition to various holidays, [REDACTED] and those kind of things.

Q Sure. Now General Ham briefed the Armed Services Committee and among very helpful points that he made to us, was that and he said he considered in advance of 9/11 putting some or all of the fighters

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

at Aviano at a higher alert status or repositioning them.

Do you know that he made, that he considered those, either of those two possibilities?

A At the time I was not aware of that. After the fact with the media coverage and the testimony, I did become aware of that fact.

Q So in his considerations you never, you don't recall him consulting you about that, discussing the possibilities, the limitations of that?

A No, and to be honest with you, that coordination would have come through the combined Air Op center and my headquarters, but on any given day, we are thinking about things like that. We have the ability to do that, being an air power, we can relocate and re-posture but there was no indication one way or the other, nor did we get -- certainly didn't get anything from General Ham personally.

Q Sure.

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

RPTS JANSEN

DCMN CRYSTAL

[1:11 p.m.]

**ARI** BY [REDACTED]:

Q So then I want to make sure I understand, then, your testimony. So on the evening of 9/11, you completed your duty day. Returned to quarters. I think you said before you went to bed you saw something on TV that indicated there was something, again, you said activities in Egypt of concern. And then, walk through this, you reported to duty the next morning, normal duty status --

A Yes, I was at work at probably 7:00, 7:30. Met with the inspector general team at 8:00. And at 9:05 was the first -- 9:05 was a call that I got from the commander of 3rd Air Force, letting us know that -- giving us a vocal order, a VOCO, to begin to generate aircraft to a combat configuration. More information to follow, knowing that we've got to load all these things up before they get to the specific munitions. But due to the developing situation in the region, they wanted to bring us up to an elevated status to give -- to give them -- to give the command -- the national command authority options.

Q Sure. And I think you explained, if I understood correctly, in your previous testimony that you did not believe that the F-16 was the appropriate weapon to apply, to use a better word, to the Benghazi situation, which is to say the overrunning of the diplomatic facility in Benghazi and so forth.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

For what were you being set up to high alert for? What kind of mission? If that was off the table or not an appropriate mission for your forces, what was in the realm of possibility?

A Right. And to the clear, I was not privy to all the information at -- what went down in Benghazi. Of course, there was discussion at a higher level, I believe, but I wasn't privy to all that.

What my commander briefed me was that he gave me a back brief on some of the things and I had actually seen some of the news about the Benghazi situation. He said that we -- I have to paraphrase because I don't remember specifically.

Q Sure.

A He said, we need you to generate four airplanes with four pilots. Get them home in crew rest. Because, as you know, they have to have crew rest of 12 hours before they can fly, unless they're already for duty. But given the fact that any sortie to North Africa would be at least 2 hours long, down, 2 hours back, crew rest is going to be a consideration. So you want a fresh pilot.

He said, get pilots on crew rest. Start generating airplanes. More to follow. There's unrest in general and we're not sure where it's going. So we want you to be ready in case we need you.

So specifically what type of missions, you know, in the back of our minds, we know that there's a whole lot of challenges to go do anything. In an area with air power, you're going to have to get clearances to fly through countries and load up weapons, et cetera. But that was immaterial at that point. We needed to start spinning

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

up and get the machine rolling.

And as I mentioned before, you get the machine rolling, and you know there's a certain amount of time before you're going to start getting the intelligence information on what tasking we may get. And that was the case in this situation as well, where we started and then the information started flowing after we began our generation about what the situation was in the region.

Q And again, who did that order come from to put the four planes and pilots on alert?

A It was a vocal order from the 3rd Air Force commander, my immediate supervisor, who is the air component -- he's the numbered Air Force commander that provides air power to both Africa Command and European Command under USAFE and AFAFRICA.

OR2 BY [REDACTED]

Q Just to clarify, sir. You said that the order was to get the machinery going to kind of move things. Was the same timeframe that has been discussed earlier about, [REDACTED] was that still an operative timeframe once the machinery, as you put it, got going about 9:05, the following morning.

A Roughly.

Q Okay.

A Yes, all the same caveats would apply. The difference would be that the middle of the night would have -- you know, we had a lot of people at work. So the machine got up to speed much quicker. So the 3 to 4 hours that I mentioned before just to bring in people

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

from their off-base homes, et cetera, we reduced that time, certainly. There was still time required to issue tools and for the word to filter out that we've been tasked to begin a generation.

Q Because the regular -- those people required to be involved in that process were essentially at work as opposed at home in bed?

A They were at work, probably had their tools out, and were probably working on airplanes already. So it was a reduction of that piece of the time. All the work that follows is going to be largely the same.

Q You alluded to it, just to be clear also. When you got the vocal order from your higher headquarters, was there a specific tasker or, you know, sort of what kind of mission might be called on? Or it was just to be on alert to be ready for whatever contingency that they felt they needed you for?

A As I recall, and please forgive my failing memory, but in general I don't remember specifics. They did mention what had happened at the Embassy in Benghazi. But I don't remember that they said be prepared for a specific type of mission.

Q And could I just clarify, too, with respect to what you knew and when about what had happened in Benghazi, do I understand correctly it was not until you got the call at 9:05 a.m. on the morning of 12 September that you learned that the Embassy had been -- something had happened in Benghazi?

A Through open source, I had heard about it earlier in the morning.

[REDACTED]

AR1 [REDACTED]. Being on TV or radio or something.

General Zobrist. Yes, sir.

DR2 BY [REDACTED]

Q But on 12 September in the morning.

A Right.

Q Right. Okay. So nothing on 11 September, prior to your --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And all the information flows through those command channels. There's rule sets, if you will, on when you call the wing commander that are, you know, somewhat flexible. And when in doubt, you call the wing commander, depending. So we're in constant contact with higher headquarters, but there was no direct order to, you know, get the wing commander on the phone until 9:05 that morning.

Q Obviously, you personally had gone home and gone to bed that night, as your normal schedule. But I take it you have, like, a watch officer or somebody on duty. Is that fair to assume?

A We have a command post.

Q Okay.

A [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] they are naturally manned to cover all the standard command post tasks, which is mission traffic, phone calls, radio calls, those kind of things.

Q That's helpful.

[REDACTED]

So, to your knowledge, did whoever was on duty that night standing watch there at the base, were they notified by anyone at higher headquarters about what had happened in Benghazi?

A I would expect that they had not been, because they're command post controllers, not intelligence officers, and -- nor a traditional watch, like you might find at a COCOM or a JOC, joint op center somewhere --

Q That's helpful.

A -- where there's an officer overseeing everything. These are master sergeants and tech sergeants that are monitoring the command and control traffic for the most part and taking -- so they are not monitoring all the intelligence traffic that would come in.

Q That's a helpful distinction.

So I take it, then -- correct me if I'm wrong -- I take it that the only instance in which somebody like that, the overnight hours at Aviano, would have been notified of what had been going on in Benghazi would be if there had been an intention by higher headquarters to utilize your assets in response to that. Is that fair?

A There are multiple situations where they may want to contact the wing commander. That would certainly be one of them. And I would expect probably a call from the command post to -- with a tie-in from the higher headquarters command post, and then I'd be talking to the three-star directly and he would pass his orders. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] So we had fairly good command and control, secure command and control, in addition to

[REDACTED]

just --

Q So higher headquarters certainly could have gotten you very quickly if they intended to do so. Is that fair?

A We routinely talked both open channels and through secure channels if required.

Q Okay. That's all. Thank you.

**ARI** BY [REDACTED]

Q So, again, you were not called telephonically, nor were you recalled to Aviano, correct?

A Correct.

Q And, in fact, when you arrived -- again, I don't mean any of this in a pejorative sense, I'm just trying to understand it -- when you arrived at work that morning, I think you said you met with the inspector in anticipation of your ongoing --

A Yes.

Q -- or maybe just beginning the inspection of the status of your airplanes and your unit.

A Yes, sir, that's true.

Q And then again pointing this out, you said 9:30 you got a call about generating four aircraft. There were some lack of specificity about the exact mission, but to generate them and prepare. Correct?

A Not exactly. 9:05 was the time.

Q Right?

A That's the not exactly part. 9:05 I got the call, and it

[REDACTED]

was generate four aircraft with two more spares, four pilots in crew rest. And not a specific mission nor location. It was a regional approach that we were given. And they said be prepared for the long term, we don't know how long this will go.

And that's significant because we want to -- I mean, in my mind, in hindsight, I look back and I say the new normal started at 9:05 for Aviano Air Base. They were apparently looking at us as a tool in their tool bag for a regional look, for regional contingencies, to have available should they so choose to use it. And we would need to manage our manpower for the long term by now you start cycling, you start to phase your pilots in and out of crew rest depending on what tasks you're going to have to do.

Q But at some point, then, after that, did your task get more specific about what specifically to prepare for?

A Yes, sir. At approximately 6 hours later, approximately 4 -- at 1400, I believe, is when -- 1400 local Aviano/Benghazi time -- we got an email that included the first draft task order that had some more specifics in there. And as I recall, and I don't recall the specific wording, and please don't hold me to the exact time.

Q Sure.

A But it was -- it was based on a meeting that the commander of USAFE AFRICA was going to, that they came out of that and issued guidance to the entire command.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Again, what I saw as a commander, based on my years at Aviano, my experience, we're posturing for the application -- the ability to use the force. If the tankers aren't there, we have limited range.

The time factor, of course, is a consideration either way with getting airplanes generated. But that gives us legs and gives the commanders more options for whatever may develop.

Q And I understand that. I appreciate very much. I guess what I don't understand, though, is that we spent some time at some length explaining quite, clearly in my mind, why F-16s, regardless of their readiness posture or availability, weren't the right tool to use during the Benghazi attack. Now, however, higher authority is anticipating some scenario in which they are the right tool?

A And we don't know what that scenario would be. At that time, I was not briefed on any particular scenario. So it made sense to me that it was a tool in the tool bag to be considered by the command authority to decide whether or not it was something they would want to use. However, if it wasn't -- intel was at a state of readiness. And when I say "it," I'm talking about the forces at the various bases -- then there was limited utility because then we're taking away the time limitation as much as possible to give the commanders more flexibility.

So I think that my understanding was that that was, because it was a regional focus at this point, and in hindsight now I realize the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

new normal started at that point. The guidance I got was look for the -- this could be a long-term operation, we don't know how long, so be prepared for the long term. There was a lot of nebulous things going on, and we just had to be ready. But until the airplanes were cocked and ready, then we might as well be at home on the couch.

CR2

BY [REDACTED]

Q I think I understand -- correct me if I'm wrong -- I think I understand what you're saying about the right tool/wrong tool and higher headquarters. I mean, it sounds like, whether it was the right tool or the wrong tool for whatever mission, it didn't sound like that would have been something that was really your decision to make. Is that fair to say? It would have been higher headquarters, somebody else that sort of had the whole picture?

A Yes, sir, that is fair to say. Our job was to provide the tool, and higher headquarters' job was to decide which tool to use and whether or not that tool is actually appropriate for the mission. And to my knowledge at this point -- and of course at this point I'm a little more engaged in -- I had to get the machine going, but then we started looking at the region and talking to our intelligence folks with intelligence briefs, whatnot. We're a little more focused on it. But we did not know what that mission might be.

Q And forgive my civilian ignorance. When you say "higher headquarter," I mean, I'm assuming that at least means 3rd Air Force. But then does it go up to -- I mean, are we talking about the Pentagon?

A Yes, sir. That's a very good question. When I say "higher

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

headquarters" in that context, I'm mainly talking about the one to two steps up. But I do acknowledge that it goes all the way up, all the way up the chain.

So I know that they're talking to the combatant commanders, they're talking -- there's the Pentagon's involved and other agencies. But for the most part, everything is going to flow through the combined air ops center, which is the operational headquarters for the 3rd Air Force commander, who had the air component role at the numbered level Air Force level for both AFAFRICA and USAFE.

CR2 [REDACTED] Thanks.

AA1 BY [REDACTED]:

Q [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Some period of time?

A I can't remember exactly. And I would like to say that we went up and down a little bit. But a couple of things about that, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] So that's again why you have to -- there may be a little bit of a delay.

Sir, I'm sorry. Could you rephrase the question?

Q I just asked how long then you were on that status.

A Thank you. That status, [REDACTED] I want to say, is how long we stayed on some version of, like, [REDACTED] is essentially

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

what we were on. Meaning the pilots had to be there, the maintenance guys had to be there. No one's in the cockpit. The jets are fully loaded and armed. We sequestered them off in one part of the base, because they had live ordnance now and that drives a lot of the net explosive weight concerns from a safety perspective. So we went into a long-term operation with these guys manning that. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

At about the 1-month point, we experienced the expected decline in combat mission readiness rate, where our pilots were flying. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And so with some creative manning, so no one gets any excess, everyone flies exactly what they need, you can keep the mission readiness up. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

You can do that for a while, but eventually it will take its toll. And we're not resourced, of course, for long-term alert commitments.

And so at that point we communicated to 3rd Air Force and let them know what our concerns were, and based on the intelligence in the region we modified our readiness. And during this time, as I mentioned before, we were preparing for the long-term.

So immediately we started doing reviews of our procedures and adjusting things to maximize effectiveness and minimize the time. And during that time, we were able to load up all the -- on all the other

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

airplanes in the fleet. For the most part, we configured them with the expected aircraft suspension equipment that we would need if we generated the whole fleet. And we started flying with electronic combat measure pods. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So we basically leaned as far forward as we could. But at some point that started hurting, too, because we had air-to-air training that you couldn't do with that particular configuration of airplane. But again we accepted that loss of air-to-air capability in order to maintain the ability to rapidly respond should something happen.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But I wasn't going to take any chances. We did it very rapidly for the initial tasking. And then over the next week, when we saw that it looked like the new normal was going to be a longer-term deal, then we started adjusting all of our procedures, and that included a lot of configuration of airplanes so they would be ready to go, should we generate the whole fleet.

Q And I think that's what you mentioned earlier, then, that after you went off this highest most alert, you didn't return to the exact training configuration you had previously, you did this hybrid with racks fitted on the plane --

A Yes, sir.

Q -- and so forth.

A But if I may clarify, not across the fleet. There were some

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

cases where maybe in one squadron we would take six airplanes and download them so that they could do a specific training for that -- that was -- it's all risk management.

Q Sure.

A And so we have the rest of the fleet get to go to manage a fairly small tasking. So if there were no indications of any -- us getting called back on alert, then we would take some of those risk factors into consideration. But for the most part, we had aircraft configured and sitting there, or the weapons were already loaded and -- or, excuse me, and the weapons were already built and stored out there. And the airplanes, the required airplanes were all in the proper configuration. So we could just put them in the hangar and start loading to maximize the time.

We did a couple practices to prove that we could do it, not for higher headquarters, but for us. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And he did that at least once, if not twice.

And also somewhere in there, I can't recall exactly, but I want to say that the indications of events in the region suggested that they wanted us back on status. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But to be honest with you, I can't remember where that was. There was a little bit of ebb and flow in there.

Q So again, that gets to my earlier point, that at some subsequent time, then, either your level of command or higher command, there was this contemplation that the tool box ought to include F-16s.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A Yes, sir.

Q Because that was among the menu of forces that were brought to a higher level, not the highest-most level, but a higher level, because higher authority, at least, wanted that option in the event of some of future event.

A My understanding is that that is generally correct, that at the combatant commander level they are always assessing what their components have in terms of forces and what readiness level postures they're at and what capabilities they bring to the fight.

How that deliberation is done and specifically that decision-making process in this case I was not privy to. And quite honestly it was interesting, but I needed to focus on generating airplanes and making sure my manpower was in the right place and so we could meet our casting, which we did.

Q Right. I understand.

**A2** BY [REDACTED]:

Q Could I just ask one question about the flight clearance issue?

A Sure.

Q You spoke very interesting detail earlier, in the first hour, about when you're in sort of a normal status and you have to fly these training missions you have to be very careful, like, say, if you're going for a range and you have training ordnance on a plane, you have to kind of go a certain route that presumably that's been worked out ahead of time with the Italians in this case.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

When you were on -- a couple questions -- when you were on this higher alert status, was working out a different flight clearance, was that part of that process that you had to go through to ready the planes in case they had to fly a mission somewhere in, say, North Africa?

A Yes, sir, it was. And it was a very difficult -- not very difficult process. As I mentioned before, the Italians, extremely cooperative. And we pretty much got everything we always wanted. But, like any bureaucracy, it takes a little bit of time to find our way through the process.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And that's an important first step. However, to the individual that's typing in the flight plan at the Italian base ops with the American working next to him, that's great, but that doesn't tell you what point you need to file to. And if we don't know where we're going to go, it's hard to put things on -- exactly on the -- in the system.

[REDACTED] So what we had done is a couple -- we did a lot of coordination in the days immediately after, so that at about the third or fourth day I was confident that we had gone beyond just needing the Minister of Defense's VOCO to let us go, that the process was in place. And we had practiced it a couple of times so that we could ensure that the Italian watch officer and their Italian general staff would get the message that we had been activated and that we would get to the phone and do all the coordination.

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

So there was a fair amount of coordination for the route planning itself. There was a very specific route that they wanted us to fly. I don't disagree with that whatsoever. And we're familiar with live operations, having employed live bombs from there in Bosnia.

There's, I'd call it three levels of flight plans. One is a basic flight plan that you can go anywhere any time. The other one is for the NERD ordnance (?), where they know we're going to a certain range, so they just want us to fly a certain route, which generally avoids cities. Even though we all know it's very safe, that's what we had agreed upon. And the last one would be with live ordnance.

And it's a balance of going there as quickly and directly as possible, because once you fly, you want to save the gas for the mission or get there as quickly as possible. But you still need to mitigate the concerns that the Italians might have with flying with live bombs over cities.

Q Sounds like -- correct me if I'm wrong here -- it sounds like if you have maybe a few hours lead time for a particular mission, whatever that mission is, but it's a combat mission where you have live ordnance, say, for example, in, you know, [REDACTED] is it fair to say that then you would have at least -- if you have an hour or two lead time, say, here's the mission, then you can work out those flight clearances with the appropriate authorities and that clears the way for the aircraft to then go on its mission with live ordnance? Is that generally how it works or am I wrong about that?

A Yes, sir. No. That's correct, in general. And within a

[REDACTED]

fairly -- while it was rapidly planned, it was planned in extreme detail. [REDACTED] was a fairly mature operation. There were standard routes that you flew. Every day, you went the exact same way, which is the same with any contingency. The first week or so of the operation is the most challenging from a flight plan and air control order type of perspective because all the civil agencies -- again, these are all -- there are a lot of civilians. There's a military control agency there as well that you would sometimes talk to, and there would be handoffs back and forth. And all that needed to get coordinated. And then the first couple times you have to work out a few of the kinks that you may run into.

Q So that covers sort of the first question, which was about a mission where you maybe have a few hours lead time to work out some of these details.

My other question would be with respect to what you might call an in extremis situation where, let's just say, for example, hypothetically, you were on this heightened alert status after 12 September, 12 September going forward. If there had been a situation that would be considered an in extremis situation where, you know, they say, look, here's a problem, you know, you don't have necessarily several hours lead time, just we need to you go, what would happen then with respect to the flight clearance issues?

A It's quite possible that the flight clearances would not get approved because of the lack of specificity on where you're going. And the intention, especially with live ordnance, the Minister of

[REDACTED]

Defense understandably want to know when we were getting activated or we got an order to launch with our live ordnance. So there would be a -- if the order was just fly down to south of Italy into international airspace and check in with these guys on the radio, it would be a challenge to get that into the international flight plan system.

The way that we were able to get around that -- not get around it, but to work through that through all of our other operations in Italy is that a lot of planning, a lot of coordination went into these at multiple levels with multiple international civil aviation organizations to work out those clearances.

Q So let's say you had to -- if you had a situation, you're not able to get the flight clearances approved, or all those things that you normally would do if you had the time to do, what would happen? Would the mission just have to be scrubbed because you can't get the flight clearance that's required or what would you guys do in that situation?

[REDACTED]

Q Okay. Just to be clear, you've mentioned previously in

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

this for the record the Italians very good partners and very helpful --

A Absolutely. Absolutely. I do think that they understood.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

DCMN ROSEN

Q Yes. Sorry. Just one more quick question on this line. And obviously, I understand that there's additional sensitivities with, you know, the Italians or any other country where we have, you know, long-term relationship, basing agreements, this sort of thing.

What about in a scenario where there wasn't an extremist situation, let's say you were able to get in reasonable time Italian cooperation on the flight clearance? What about the other end? Let's say there was a situation in Libya, for example. I mean, would we be in a position in an extremist situation to have to wait for that country to, you know, work out the same kind of flight clearance with the Italians or is it sort of a different dynamic when you're talking about a country where we're not necessarily basing our forces on a long-term basis?

A The situation you just laid out would be a violation of their air sovereignty. So if you do that, if we, as a Nation, decide to do that, it has to be considered what the cost/benefit is. Me, personally, as the commander on the ground, in my professional experience, I would have a hard time launching aircraft into the night with an unknown mission to an unknown location. That accepts a lot of risk. And without the fidelity of information on the other side, first of all, I don't think that my superiors would ask me to do that. But if I were ever asked to do that, I would question in a lot of detail, okay, so what is this for? And what am I supposed to tell my pilots that are about to take off?

[REDACTED]

Because there are some very real practical things they -- what frequencies are they going to be on? Who are they talking to? What's the air traffic in the area? Who is the air traffic controller? Who is the guy on the ground? What's the threat?

Now, because we all know that a bad situation can get worse when you compound it with something along those lines. And I'm going to be the guy wearing this outfit that goes to talk to that airman, my airman's family. And I've done that, and I don't want to do it again.

OR2 [REDACTED]. Thank you.

ARI BY [REDACTED]:

Q So the State Department empanelled an Accountability Review Board after the actions in Benghazi to study in part -- some aspects of the Benghazi episode.

Did that board or its staff have an occasion to interview you?

A No, sir.

Q Did, to your recollection, they -- or anyone acting under their authority gather records from you or emails or unit status information or any material of any sort?

A Not that I'm aware of, sir. Although I would point out that most of my coordination was with the numbered Air Force. And what they collected from our numbered Air Force, 3rd Air Force I do not know. But, no, not at the Aviano level am I aware of any collection.

Q And similarly, did you contribute to or participate in or write up any sort of an action -- after-action review for the Aviano squadrons and their activities or absence of activities in the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Benghazi-related portion, not now how they may posture themselves for new normal, but for the Benghazi portion?

A The way I saw it, the action started and hasn't stopped. And so we did multiple hot washes at our level. We had video teleconferences with the 3rd Air Force commander multiple times where we talked about some of the procedures and some of our challenges and some of the things that we would do differently next time. How that was documented, I don't know. But it was done more in the context of an ongoing operation with fine-tuning procedures as opposed to they were done, let's -- what are we going to do better next time.

Q Right. I see.

OR2 [REDACTED] One last question. With respect to the -- you know, we talked a lot about the time problem involved with going from a training status to a combat status. And there were a lot of moving parts involved with that. It's essentially a math problem, it seems, fair to say. And, you know, I think it would be helpful from the committees' perspective to see some documentation just to kind of see it. Kind of be helpful to see that. I mean, to the extent that you or, you know, DOD would be willing to facilitate that, that would be, you know, helpful. Just to kind of see what all was involved with, you know, some of these steps that we talked about where, you know, if they're done concurrently, [REDACTED] That would be just -- wanted to point that out.

Mr. Richards. To clarify, what specifically are you requesting?

OR2 [REDACTED] We can talk about this after. Just documentation

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

about, you know, basically what all was going into this, this process the general has laid out so helpfully. It's helpful to sort of have it sort of orally on record, but I think it would also be helpful for members sometimes to see it so they can kind of have a better understanding of what all was actually involved in that.

Mr. Richards. We're happy to accommodate any request if you want to talk after.

OR2 [REDACTED]. Appreciate it.

AA1 [REDACTED]. We're done with this side.

OR2 [REDACTED]. Off the record.

(Discussion held off the record.)

OD2 [REDACTED]. So it's 2:00. Can we go back on the record?

OD2 BY [REDACTED]:

Q We won't be long, so I don't think we'll be taking our entire hour. Or even close to that.

General, I wanted to have you clarify just a bit about what EUCOM or what the other command above you would understand about your readiness capability. You had mentioned that you were home for that night. And that if they needed to get in touch with you, they could get in touch with you.

The way it works, do they generally understand how you're configured at Aviano? When I say "they," you can fill in the blank, whether that's EUCOM, AFRICOM. Would they generally understand your level of readiness, sort of what your aircraft capability is at a particular given time?

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

A Yes, sir, they would. And there's a variety of mechanisms for that. The -- most of the commands at the numbered Air Force and even the -- what we call major command, the four-star level, and USAFE or AFAFRICA, U.S. Air Forces in Europe or U.S. Air Forces Africa, they are going to have what we call a rollup of the readiness statistics that they would get -- they have a lower-level staff officer, major or lieutenant colonel, compile all the data that we put into our SORTS system, S-O-R-T-S system, the DRRS system, I think it's DRRS.

And we also have an air expeditionary force tracking system where we -- for deployment capability. They roll all that up and report by wing or by organization to the four star probably once a month or so. And then there's reported criteria when they drop below a certain level of readiness.

And so while I don't recall exactly how U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa did it, I do know that they had a rollup, and it included our readiness. And the numbered Air Force commander, 3rd Air Force commander had visibility on that at any given time.

I mentioned there was a couple of different methods. The other way is that just through our daily interactions with our three star boss at 3rd Air Force and with -- we'd have a video teleconference once a week, once every two weeks, depending. We would talk about what we have coming up. We would send up email reports just on, status reports on how things were going. Through that, they would know generally where we were TDY to -- deployment to Bulgaria. The runway is closing at Aviano so we're going to Bulgaria to train. They would be aware

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

of those kind of things and how it would affect our ability to rapidly generate to meet our, first and foremost, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

And between that, all those ways, they would have a pretty good idea on what we are experiencing problems with and any particular limiting factors we might have in executing any particular mission.

Q Okay. And so to be as clear as possible, would it be fair to say that there is somebody above you in the chain of command that if they saw the events unfolding in Benghazi, they would have an understanding of what it would take to deploy your assets out of Aviano and the time constraints involved in that?

A Yes, sir.

Q And how accurate within plus or minus 15 minutes, a few hours? I mean, are they -- are they generally -- is this generally a very accurate understanding of what your capabilities are?

A Yes, sir. The first level is the -- the general understanding of the commander at the numbered Air Force level, he knows through the readiness reporting and his interactions with us what we have going on and what our capabilities are.

In my case, my numbered Air Force commander had actually commanded the 31st Fighter Wing 4 years prior. So he had very good understanding of -- better than other bases, because he actually commanded there.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

At onto that, the actual readiness reports that he would see routinely, it's quite possible that when they considered the different options they said, hey, give us the readiness report. Let's see what we're missing.

I'm pretty sure Lakenheath's deployed, Spangdahlem's got this going on, Aviano's got an inspection going on. He probably knew all that. So he had a pretty good sense up front.

Now, in terms of how long it would take to generate airplanes, I -- I think that that would be a function of what's our required tasking. [REDACTED] -- that we're on the hook to be able to do that. Anything on top of that he would need to figure out --

Q Sure.

A -- based on our current status and what my assessment as a commander on the scene would be. He would have a general feel, though, that it's going to take -- you know, we're not going to be generate airplanes like that. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He would certainly know that.

Q [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] That slowed us down a little bit. But that was kind of in the window for what I expected.

Q Okay. And so for them, the -- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He would generally have that piece of data. When I say "he," somebody --

A Yes, sir.

Q -- that would also -- I guess be in either AFRICOM or CENTCOM would that understand events unfolding in Benghazi.

A I believe that the AFRICOM and EUCOM staff may have a general idea. But they would, I believe, reach out immediately to the air component, if the air component didn't reach out to them, as they're assessing the situation and get the actual status of those forces in that component. In this case, the air component.

Q Okay.

DDI BY [REDACTED]

Q General, there was a discussion during the last hour about a VOCO that you received from 3rd Air Force, 0905 on September 12th. Just first, can you tell us for the record what a VOCO is?

A You bet. A VOCO is an abbreviation for a vocal order.

Q Vocal order. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

[REDACTED]

So at that time, was your understanding that that VOCO was issued specifically in response to this situation in Benghazi? In other words, was the response or were the aircraft being generated specific -- specifically to respond to Benghazi?

A No. It was not my understanding. My understanding was that we were looking regionally. And perhaps longer term. Whether or not the Benghazi -- I assumed that the Benghazi incident, as I became more aware of it, it became clearer that that -- that was certainly a focus of attention throughout the night. But I got the impression from talking to my 3rd Air Force commander that they were looking regionally at this point, that the -- at this point, if I remember the timeline correctly, somewhere in there I realized that -- or was told that -- a couple airplanes had taken off from Libya.

But, again, my focus, quite honestly, was on the tactical level: Let's figure out, let's get the machine in motion. But my understanding was, indeed, that it was longer term and regional that we were being looked at at this point. And very rapidly I understood this -- I thought this was the new normal that we were starting.

Q So in the last hour there was a discussion about the appropriateness of using the F-16 on the night of the attacks in Benghazi. And then there seemed to also be a parallel discussion about whether it was appropriate to use F-16 for any potential contingencies that might arise regionally. Could you maybe just help differentiate those two for us? You had mentioned --

A Yes.

[REDACTED]

Q -- during the previous hour that you felt that the F-16 was inappropriate on the night of the attacks.

Did you agree that there were some contingencies that could evolve regionally that would require the use of the F-16?

A Yes. The F-16, or really an F-15-E or aircraft of a fighter nature with precision weapons, have some capabilities that in certain contingencies might be useful. The urban environment is challenging. And so I can envision a scenario where there is a movement in another nation and the military or militants are moving across the desert in a -- and we know that they're going in a certain direction due to intelligence and they want to -- somebody wants us to stop them. That's the kind of scenario, maybe a little more like [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] where you have things in the open, collateral damage is less of an issue. The scenario on the ground is better understood. There are clearer objectives that are easily -- easily translated to my pilots that are going to go out there. Perhaps even time to figure out what the rules of engagement are in that particular country.

That would be a scenario where an F-16 would be -- be more useful.

Believe me, I believe the F-16 is a very useful, useful tool and has a lot of capability, but there are some limitations in any fighter, fighter.

Q And just to further distinguish the night of the attack from the events as they were unfolding going forward, was it your understanding that your aircraft would potentially be supported by

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ground forces in areas where contingencies might arise, in other words, where there were special operations forces or there would be some sort of support on the ground in the form of an ATAC or otherwise?

A It was unknown, but our assumption would be that if it required a close air support environment, that we would either use -- there would either be some type of ground control element, in the form of joint terminal air controller or some type of special operations. Or we would do the control from the air, which can be done, but it's very difficult. You know, depends on the scenario.

So, in general, yes, we would expect there to either be a scenario that doesn't require control on the ground or that control would be provided somehow.

002 BY [REDACTED]:

Q So then to be as clear as possible, the verbal command to have Aviano change readiness [REDACTED], in no way, a revision of the appropriateness of that tool. The same factors -- in other words, the concerns that you had that you would have had about using that tool with what you knew about Benghazi on the night of the attacks are still the same concerns you would have going forward, should they exist?

A Yes, sir. Let me clarify. Should a scenario equivalent to Benghazi, similar in nature to Benghazi occur in a different country in the region, I would have the same concerns about a no-notice launch into the night with no coordination with the Italians to an area with an unknown threat and an unknown situation on the ground with no clear

[REDACTED]

objectives, and again, a very unclear situation. I would have the exact same concerns about the appropriateness of using an F-16 in that case and would certainly get into a serious discussion with my commanders if they wanted us to go down that road if our -- we could even do it, assuming that the jets were ready in that case. So, yes, the concerns would be the same for the appropriateness of should it have occurred during the new normal.

Q Okay. And then one final question. The idea that you could send an unarmed, naked aircraft as rapidly as possible to Libya to do some sort of flyover the minute somebody heard that something was going on, do all the same limitations apply? And, if so, could you just sort of walk through that?

A Yes, sir. Yes, the same limitations apply and even more so. I was, quite honestly, surprised that that had been insinuated as a viable option for a variety of reasons. First of all --

Q I'm sorry. When you say "insinuated" --

A In the press. I'm sorry. Thank you for clarifying.

When I read the press that there were individuals that had suggested that that should have been considered and, in fact, done, I won't take issue with considering -- we should consider all options, because we have a flexible force. But the risks that would have been assumed by the military, by the United States of America, by the wing commander of the 31st Fighter Wing, and my airmen and their family would have been incredible.

And I don't think I would have been able to explain, should we



[REDACTED]

have executed something like that, I could not have explained to that airman's spouse, when I handed him or her the flag, why I was doing this. And why we had done that.

There are some situations that, in my professional military opinion, there are some situations that -- that warrant extremis types of military operations. But almost all of those situations involve a certain level of posturing. We have in extremis CAS, Close Air Support, in the desert that we are prepared to execute. That said, when it is executed, it's done very carefully, and they train to it and talk about it and it has been thought through.

To my knowledge, no United States military aircraft has ever taken off on no-notice or short-notice from a foreign country and overflowed, unarmed, another foreign country with no resources, no support.

I did read a retired military officer said that you could have flown down there and punched off your fuel tanks and flown over and landed somewhere else. That would have been almost impossible to do. It's a thousand miles away. While this individual said they had flown at Aviano, I'm not sure that the same range is applied to the platform they were flying. Be very challenging to do.

And I think it's also worth noting, since you bring it up, that the concept of a show of force is -- certainly not a new concept. And the concept of a show of force, the majority of people who think about it and talk about it have an understanding formed in Afghanistan and Iraq where there are certain conditions, I think, that would suggest a show of force may have the potential to be effective. The definition

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

of "effective" probably in this case being whether or not the hostile activity ceases after you overfly it. [REDACTED]

And I would differentiate between Afghanistan and Iraq and the situation in Benghazi or something similar in the new normal where the hostile entities on the ground have to be conditioned so that they take some action when aircraft flies over. Why do they do that in Afghanistan or Iraq? Because for years, after the airplane flew over the first time, the next time the bomb blew somebody up. And so they understood that the noise meant that there was a threat. [REDACTED]

There are also certain conditions. Daytime, it tended to be more effective because you could -- we had multiple sources of seeing non urban environment, because they know we're not going to drop bombs in an urban environment. [REDACTED]

So that the situation that developed in Benghazi was, even if you could have had airplanes overhead in an Afghanistan-style scenario, orbiting for many days on end, ready to go do that, it still would have been questionable whether or not the conditions were right for a show of force like that. [REDACTED]

Would I allow -- would I have allowed my airmen to take off? Certainly not single ship. But even as a two ship, in the middle of the night, with no guidance on where to go, if they could even get airborne, with the lack of flight plan, et cetera, I'm not sure that I would even, in my good military judgment, if I could let them do that. Nor do I think my commanders would ask me to do that because of the limitations, the probability of success would be so low and the risk

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ODD [REDACTED] Thank you very much. I think we are done on this side.

OR2 [REDACTED] One minute.

[Discussion held off the record.]

/

[REDACTED]

RPTS MCCONNELLDCMN ROSEN

[2:19 p.m.]

*OR2* BY [REDACTED]:

Q I think we have maybe just one question as a quick follow-up. Can you hear us down there? I'm not sure they can hear us.

On the record. I'm sorry, General, just one quick clarifying question about the F-16. You had talked earlier in the last hour about hypotheticals where you might have had to use it, say, over a desert area instead of open air, like that. Forgive my ignorance, does the Air Force have a history of using the F-16 in urban environments? Have you used it in urban environments?

A You bet, and that's certainly not ignorance. The F-16 is, like all of our fighters, has capabilities throughout the spectrum of conflict. So yes, we have indeed used it in urban environments. It's more challenging and requires more training to be proficient at it and there is more risk involved due to the complexities. And if you can imagine looking through a video camera at a baseball field and there's one soccer ball in the middle of a baseball field, you can find that pretty easily. You can see around it and understand the situation fairly easily.

That's the desert environment for the most part. Now envision a whole bunch of people out there and basketballs, and softballs, and golf balls all out there. That is the urban environment. I can

probably find -- you could probably find that softball, or the soccer ball that you are looking for, but how you operate your airplane and employ, is more challenging. There are more complexities that you have got to consider. And quite honestly, there's a lot of limitations on what you can do with the ordinance that you have got on board.

Q I take it, is it helpful in the urban environment to have, if there are people on the ground to have the appropriate equipment to help your pilots actually locate the target more precisely in the urban environment? Is that something that helps facilitate that?

A Yes, it does, and for the most part in Afghanistan, and Iraq, we rely heavily on that, because that's -- they are the ones that are most in touch with the ongoing situation on the ground, and they communicate that through a variety of means. We have got some technology that is very useful for that, to include rover pods where they can see what we are seeing so we can talk about the same reference. They can spot things with the laser beam that our targeting pod can see.

So absolutely, having that kind of technology on the ground, that kind of expertise in the form of a joint terminal controller who is trained and understands how to use air power, increases the ability to effectively employ air power, but you still have the limitations of potential for collateral damage. If the soccer ball is next to a golf ball and the golf ball is friendly, and we have to be careful about that, then I may not be able to employ all of my ordinance. I may have to strafe, or use a fusing setting that will allow mitigation of the

[REDACTED]

explosion.

Q That's very helpful. Thank you so much. Unless anyone else has any other question, I think that concludes the interview. You guys okay?

002 [REDACTED]. No, I was just going to say, on behalf of you know, certainly my colleagues here, both the Oversight Committee, as well as the Armed Services Committee, and I'm sure I'm speaking for these guys, we appreciate you coming in and very much appreciate your service, and to your colleagues their service as well. So thank you very much.

General Zobrist. Thank you for looking out for us all the time. I appreciate it. Thanks for your service, too. When I get a chance to come to D.C. it is always fascinating to me because it is a reminder of what a big enterprise our government is, and we are all trying to do the same thing. So thanks for your support of the military, our men and women, and especially the families really do appreciate the support.

002 [REDACTED]. Thank you. Let's off the record.

[Whereupon, at 2:23 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

