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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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LAWRENCE J. BRADY
STAFF DIRECTOR

November 26, 2012

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform continues to conduct oversight of the facts and circumstances surrounding the deaths of Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and his colleagues on September 11, 2012, in Benghazi, Libya.¹ As part of this oversight, the Committee has reviewed a November 9, 2012, unclassified timeline of Department of Defense actions from September 11-12, 2012, in response to the attack in Benghazi.² This document was provided by the Department to the Committee on November 9, 2012.

In reviewing the timelines released by the Department of State,³ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),⁴ and DoD, the Committee observed certain instances where the mobilization and

¹ Letter from Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations to Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary, U.S. Department of State (Sept. 20, 2012); Letter from Rep. Darrell Issa, Chairman, U.S. Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations to Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary, U.S. Department of State (Oct. 2, 2012); Letter from Rep. Darrell Issa, Chairman, U.S. Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations to Barack Obama, President, U.S. (Oct. 19, 2012); Letter from Rep. Darrell Issa, Chairman, U.S. Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations to Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary, U.S. Department of State (Oct. 29, 2012); Letter from Rep. Darrell Issa, Chairman, U.S. Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and Rep. Jason Chaffetz, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations to Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary, U.S. Department of State (Nov. 1, 2012).

² E-Mail from William Hudson, Director, Congressional Investigations, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, to Staff, H. Comm. on Oversight and Government Reform (Nov. 9, 2012, 14:44 EST) (on file with author); *see also* U.S. Department of Defense, DOD Releases Detailed Timeline for Benghazi Response, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=118500> (last visited Nov. 15, 2012).

³ U.S. Department of State, Background Briefing on Libya: Oct. 9, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/10/198791.htm> (last visited Nov. 15, 2012).

⁴ Although a version of the Central Intelligence Agency's timeline was reportedly disclosed to The Washington Post, the Agency has not provided an official timeline to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. *See* David Ignatius, *In Benghazi Timeline, CIA Errors but No Evidence of Conspiracy*, THE WASHINGTON

deployment of assets appeared to be significantly delayed. In others, the authorization to deploy resources appears to have been withheld without any explanation. In addition, there is no insight into the Department's coordination with any other component of the government. Thus, while the Department's timeline provides basic information on its efforts during and after the attack, it leaves many questions unanswered.

Most notably, we are concerned about the apparently slow reaction times in deploying our resources to protect American lives overseas in hostile environments. For example, AFRICOM's order of the C-17 aircraft from Ramstein, Germany to retrieve American personnel from Tripoli, Libya occurred at 6:05 a.m. Eastern European Time (EET) on September 12, 2012, more than eight hours after the start of the attack. However, the aircraft did not depart Germany for Libya until 2:15 p.m. EET, eight hours after the order and more than 16 hours after the start of the attack. Moreover, once in Libya, the aircraft did not depart Tripoli until 7:17 p.m. EET, meaning that the first wave of American personnel evacuated from Benghazi to Tripoli waited almost 12 hours before departing for Germany to receive full medical attention. Meanwhile, the second wave of American personnel evacuated from Benghazi experienced almost a nine-hour wait in Tripoli to depart for Germany.

Likewise, the two teams of special operations forces and the two Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST) platoons also appear to have experienced delays. According to your timeline, although you provided verbal authorization for the preparation to deploy two FAST platoons and two teams of special operations forces by 2:00 a.m. EET on September 12, 2012, these teams did not arrive in Tripoli or their intermediate staging base in southern Europe until almost 18 hours later. In the end, the special operations forces and a FAST platoon did not arrive at their respective staging destinations until at least 22 hours after the start of the attack in Benghazi.

Additionally, the timeline indicates several instances where preparations to deploy resources were authorized, but not all resources were immediately deployed. Rather, the actual authorizations to deploy were issued almost five hours after the start of the attack in Benghazi. It is also unclear from your timeline when the two FAST platoons were actually authorized to deploy. Further, your timeline indicates that only one of the FAST platoons actually deployed, arriving in Tripoli at 8:56 a.m. on September 12, 2012. In sum, the delayed response times, vague deployment destinations, and an un-deployed FAST platoon, create an appearance of undue hesitance to best respond to the attack in Benghazi.

To assist the Committee with its oversight, we ask that the Department provide the following information:

1. Given that the top leaders in DoD were made aware of the violent attack on the U.S. compound in Benghazi by 10:32 p.m. EET on September 11, 2012, why was

there an almost eight-hour delay in ordering a C-17 aircraft to deploy to Libya for the evacuation of American personnel?

2. Upon AFRICOM ordering the C-17 aircraft to prepare to deploy at 6:05 a.m. EET on September 12, 2012, why was there an additional over eight-hour delay in actually deploying the C-17 aircraft to Tripoli?
3. At what time did the C-17 aircraft from Ramstein, Germany that evacuated American personnel arrive in Tripoli, Libya?
4. Were there other capable aircraft in the vicinity of Tripoli that could have retrieved the injured sooner than the C-17 aircraft deployed from Ramstein?
5. At what time did the aircraft that transported the first wave of American personnel from Benghazi to Tripoli at 7:40 a.m. EET on September 12, 2012, arrive in Benghazi?
6. At what time did the aircraft that transported the second wave of American personnel from Benghazi to Tripoli at 10:00 a.m. EET on September 12, 2012, arrive in Benghazi?
7. Were nearby safer destinations other than Tripoli considered when evacuating the first and second waves of American personnel from Benghazi? If so, then why was Tripoli chosen?
8. What is the standard amount of time for the EUCOM special operations force, U.S.-based special operations force, and the FAST platoons to arrive at an intermediate staging base or on the scene, once authorization to deploy is issued?
9. At what times were the two FAST platoons authorized to deploy from their original stations?
10. Although two FAST platoons were authorized to "prepare to deploy," why did only one FAST platoon arrive in Tripoli?
11. Did the decisions and considerations of any senior Administration officials contribute to the delay in actually deploying either the two teams of special operations forces or the two FAST platoons?
12. Why were only authorizations to "prepare to deploy" made, and who made the final decision to actually deploy the FAST platoon to Tripoli?
13. Why were the two teams of special operations forces only deployed to an intermediate staging base in southern Europe, and never deployed to Libya?

14. Considering that American personnel from the U.S. compound in Benghazi reached the nearby facility at 11:36 p.m. EET on September 11, 2012, and were escorted to the airport from the facility at 6:00 a.m. EET on September 12, 2012, why did the special operation forces not reach their intermediate staging base in southern Europe until almost 14 hours later? Why did the FAST platoon not reach Tripoli sooner than almost 15 and a half hours later?
15. Was there an exfiltration plan on record for the compound in Benghazi and Tripoli, and was that plan executed?
16. Was there a non-combatant evacuation plan on record for Libya, and was that plan executed?

We request that you provide the requested information and designate appropriate officials to provide a briefing to the Committee staff as soon as possible, but **no later than 5:00 p.m. on December 3, 2012**. When producing documents to the Committee, please deliver production sets to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Thomas Alexander or Sang Yi of the Committee Staff at 202-225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Darrell Issa
Chairman



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman
Subcommittee on
National Security, Homeland Defense
and Foreign Operations

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Minority Member

The Honorable John F. Tierney, Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations