



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

AUG - 8 2013

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of July 31, concerning the four Department employees who were placed on administrative leave following the issuance of the report of the independent Benghazi Accountability Review Board (ARB).

In its report issued on December 19, 2012, the ARB stated that responsibility for the lethal attack on the Special Mission Compound in Benghazi “rests solely and completely with the terrorists who perpetrated the attack.” At the same time, it found that four senior State Department officials within two bureaus demonstrated “a lack of proactive leadership and management ability in their responses to security concerns posed by Special Mission Benghazi.” The ARB, however, “did not find that any individual U.S. Government employee engaged in misconduct or willfully ignored his or her responsibilities, and, therefore did not find reasonable cause to believe that an individual breached his or her duty so as to be subject of a recommendation for disciplinary action.”

In light of the independent ARB’s findings and the importance that the Department places on embassy security worldwide, on December 20, 2012, the Department placed the four individuals identified by the ARB on administrative leave while it reviewed this issue and considered what, if any, personnel actions might be appropriate. Administrative leave at the Department of State is the absence from duty administratively authorized or approved by the leave-approving officer and does not result in a charge in leave of any kind or in loss of basic salary.

The Honorable
Darrell E. Issa, Chairman,
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,
House of Representatives.

cc: The Honorable Elijah Cummings

The review, which includes evaluation by the Department's Human Resources office and the Office of the Director General of the Foreign Service, is considering the ARB's findings, the facts and circumstances underlying the individuals' performance and conduct during the time period leading up to the Benghazi attacks, and the individuals' broader performance history over the course of their full careers in service to the Department, as well as the applicable rules and standards that govern personnel actions.

The Department is not "unwilling or unable to reach decisions on these important personnel matters," and it is not "delaying a final determination" due to the ongoing congressional investigation or any other ongoing review. Rather, the Department is taking the prudent course and carefully working toward resolution. As a new Secretary, when Secretary Kerry took office, he had his own questions and wanted time to understand the ARB's findings. He will be fully briefed again with updated information prior to any further decisions on the status of these employees.

We hope you find this information helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of help on this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Gibbons", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas B. Gibbons
Acting Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs