

Appendix 5

RPTS JOHNSON

DCMN BURRELL

DDCIA MICHAEL MORELL ON BENGHAZI

Wednesday, May 22, 2013

U.S. House of Representatives,
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:40 a.m., in Room HVC-304, the Capitol, the Honorable Mike Rogers [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Rogers, Thornberry, Miller, Conaway, King, LoBiondo, Nunes, Westmoreland, Bachmann, Rooney, Heck, Pompeo, Calvert, Ruppertsberger, Thompson, Schakowsky, Langevin, Schiff, Gutierrez, Himes, and Sewell.

Staff Present: J. Michael Allen, Staff Director; Christopher Doneso, Chief Counsel; Darren Dick, Deputy Staff Director; Katie Wheelbarger, Senior Counsel; Thomas Corcoran, Senior Policy Advisor; Andy Keiser, Senior Policy Advisor; Ashley Lowry, Chief Clerk; Nathan Hauser, Professional Staff Member; Sarah Geffroy, Senior Counsel; Chelsey Campbell, Professional Staff Member; Brooke Eisele, Professional Staff Member; Geof Kahn, Professional Staff Member; Shannon Stuart, Professional Staff Member; Jim Hildebrand, Professional Staff Member; Susan Phalen, Communications Director; Kristin Jepson, Security Director; Todd Jones, Congressional Fellow; Allison Getty, Minority Communications Director; Michael

Bahar, Minority General Counsel; Janet Fisher, Minority Counsel; Chief Minehart, Minority Professional Staff Member; Carly Scott, Minority Professional Staff Member; Linda Cohen, Minority Professional Staff Member; Heather Molino, Minority Professional Staff Member; Amanda Rogers-Thorpe, Minority Professional Staff Member; and Wyndee Parker, Liaison to Minority Leader.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am going to call the committee to order and recognize the ranking member for a motion to close the hearing.

MR. RUPPERSBERGER: Pursuant to House rule XI, clause (2)(g)(2)(a), I move the hearing be closed because disclosure of testimony, evidence, or other matters being considered would endanger national security.

THE CHAIRMAN: Motion made to close the hearing on the basis of protecting national security. The clerk will take the roll.

THE CLERK: Chairman Rogers.

THE CHAIRMAN: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Thornberry.

MR. THORNBERRY: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Miller.

MR. MILLER: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Conaway.

MR. CONAWAY: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. LoBiondo.

MR. LOBIONDO: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Nunes.

MR. NUNES: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Westmoreland.

MR. WESTMORELAND: Aye.

THE CLERK: Ms. Bachmann.

MS. BACHMANN: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Rooney.

MR. ROONEY: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Heck.

DR. HECK: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Ruppertsberger.

MR. RUPPERSBERGER: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Aye.

THE CLERK: Ms. Schakowsky.

MS. SCHAKOWSKY: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Schiff.

MR. SCHIFF: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Gutierrez.

MR. GUTIERREZ: Aye.

THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, there are 15 ayes and zero noes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Great. The motion carries. The committee is in now closed session for the purposes of protecting national security information.

Before we begin, the Security Director has a reminder for our members, our guests, and our staff.

MS. JEPSON: I just want to remind everyone if you haven't checked your electronics out front to please do so at this time. That includes BlackBerrys, cell phones, E-readers, laptops recording devices, cameras, wireless headsets, and pagers.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Today, at the request of many, we will swear in the witness.

Mr. Morell, would you please stand and raise your right hand? Do you swear

that the testimony you are about to give this committee is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?

MR. MORELL: I do.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Today, as part of the committee's ongoing oversight into the attacks against United States facilities in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11th, 2012, the Deputy Director of the CIA, Michael Morell, has agreed to answer our questions about the events after the attacks.

Before we begin, I want to reiterate that in response to our continuing requests for more information, the Agency provided to this committee additional materials yesterday. These materials include debriefing summaries and email exchanges by the Agency personnel from the days after the attacks. I remind all members that they are of course free to review any of these materials or be briefed by HPSCI staff at any time. The committee investigation is an ongoing priority, and I encourage all members to be as engaged as possible.

The terrorist attacks in Benghazi by extremists and al-Qa'ida associates were a national tragedy, resulting in the death of four Americans, including Ambassador Stevens. The attacks were also a reminder of the continuing terrorist threat we face. America must continue to confront al-Qa'ida, and we must maintain a strong American counterterrorism policy not only in the war zones, but around the world.

Al-Qa'ida and its associates have not slowed down their efforts to secure a safe haven and plan operations against the United States and Western interests. To address and defeat this enemy, all Americans must view this continuing and growing threat with clear eyes. To maintain support for a strong counterterrorism policy and a robust military effort, the American public must have accurate and complete information about the threats the country faces.

I believe the talking point issue provided to this committee and to administration officials on September 15th failed to address the country's need for this information. Those points were unduly cautious because they failed to describe the perpetrators' believed links to al-Qa'ida and known terrorists. But they were equally careless in their description of the event as a demonstration. When describing to the American people the nature of the threats the country faces, words matter. And in this case, the words chosen simply failed to accurately describe the extent of the information we knew at the time. Unfortunately, the inaccuracies remained for far too long.

Recently, the public learned that Mr. Morell played a key role in the development of those talking points. And with the recent public release of various versions of the talking points, and the interagency email traffic that preceded the final version, it is clear that further information about how they were developed would help this committee understand the role of intelligence in informing policymakers about national security events.

Mr. Ruppertsberger, you have any opening statement?

MR. RUPPERSBERGER: Sure. First thing before I start, Mr. Morell, for years, unfortunately, I think this committee did not have the relationship that we needed to have with the CIA as far as oversight is concerned. We thought for a long time that the CIA were not giving us the information and testimony. And I think since you have been in leadership that changed. I think the chairman and I at least can state that you have been very open, very forthright. You have told us information that normally we weren't getting in the past. So I just want to acknowledge that fact that we do respect the way you have handled at least this committee.

With that said, in the past few weeks the media has been full of reports of other

individuals speculating about your motives and reasons for these decisions. I am very glad the committee members can now directly hear from you on the record why you selected the final content of the talking points and put this to rest. I am also glad the administration released emails related to the talking points so that Congress and the public can see their actual content. I want to say at this time, based on my analysis, at this time, and I think that is clear, because who knows where and what is going to happen tomorrow or the next day, and based on my analysis of the emails, it does not appear the content of the talking points was politically motivated. Because there is no mention of politics in the emails, there is no mention of the presidential election that was forthcoming, or covering up information about the terrorist attack. That doesn't mean that I am concerned about the issue and the elements there. But at this point that is my analysis of the emails that we received. Instead, the officials that were asked to review the talking points repeatedly stressed the same three concerns: One, protecting classified information; two, protecting law enforcement equities for the ongoing investigation, basically done by the FBI, and ensuring that information provided to Congress was accurate.

It is my hope that with your testimony about your concerns and motivations regarding the talking points Congress can move forward on oversight of what I think are the two most important issues regarding the attacks: Improving physical security at all U.S. overseas posts, and bringing the attackers to justice. Regarding State Department's performance, Ambassador Pickering and Admiral Mullen, two well respected experts and patriots who have served Democratic and Republican Presidents, made excellent recommendations in their independent review. Then-Secretary Clinton immediately accepted all of them and directed State Department personnel to implement them. Secretary Kerry is now there to ensure

that all the implementation is completed.

Deputy Director Morell, I would also like you to update the committee on whether the CIA conducted reviews of the Benghazi events, what lessons learned you identified, and what steps CIA leadership is taking to implement those lessons and improve CIA's performance and security the same as the State Department.

Finally, it has been a while since all members received an update on the status of known and suspected attackers. Without getting ahead of the FBI investigation, I would like you to describe what progress CIA has made in identifying and locating attackers and providing intelligence support to law enforcement investigators.

I yield back.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thanks. I too want to thank you for your cooperation. Just for the information of the committee, we have had those 4,000 classified cables. It has taken us a while to get through them. We wanted to wait until we had a better picture through those emails before we asked Mr. Morell to come and testify. He has always been forthcoming. And when we called, Mr. Ruppertsberger and I asked Mr. Morell, he was eager to do it at our time frame. And I want to make the committee well aware of those facts.

With that, Mr. Morell, if you would not mind giving your opening statement, we will take it from there.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL MORELL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MR. MORELL: Thank you. Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Ruppertsberger, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this issue. I just want to say up front that I take this extremely seriously, and I was reminded of that this week when [REDACTED] [REDACTED] recognized the contributions of Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods, who died on that rooftop in Benghazi that night, their contributions to our country. So this is, the seriousness of this is very fresh in my memory.

I very much want to respect the committee's request that I speak for only 15 minutes so that you can ask as many questions as possible. And as such, I want to focus my opening remarks on the now famous talking points. I want to do this because there remain, in my view, significant misperceptions in the media about the talking points, to include such things like the talking points were edited at the Deputies Committee meeting, that I conspired with the White House and the State Department to water down the talking points, and that I made the vast majority of the changes to the talking points. All of these assertions are not true. Mr. Chairman, I do not want to come across as defending the talking points or the process by which they were produced. As you will hear me say later, both were flawed. But what I want to do today is to set the record straight on exactly what did happen. So in the next few minutes I want to walk through the evolution of the talking points with a focus on the role of the CIA, to include my personal role. Then I would be happy to answer as many questions as I can. I brought some folks with me who can help me do that.

Among those is the DNI's General Counsel, Chief Litt, who as you know has worked this issue very hard, and who knows a lot about the interagency aspects of this better than I.

So let me start by walking step by step through the process so that we all have that as background when I get to the details. So as you remember, the committee requested the talking points during a Friday, 14 September briefing by then-Director Petraeus. [Senior CIA official #1], who is with me today, and who was then Director of our Office of Terrorism Analysis, had joined the Director for that briefing. And [senior CIA official #1] produced the first draft of the talking points immediately upon returning to headquarters. [Senior CIA official #1] coordinated these talking points with [senior CIA official #1] substantive experts, with officers from our National Clandestine Service, and with officers from our Office of General Counsel. The points then went through an additional editing and coordination process inside CIA. That coordination process was handled largely by officers from our Office of Public Affairs and our Office of Congressional Affairs, and did not involve the substantive experts. This was followed by a coordination process outside CIA, with the National Security Staff, the State Department, the FBI, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. As the day ended on 14 September, there was no interagency agreement on the talking points. The morning of Saturday, September 15th, began with a Deputies meeting, at which the talking points came up briefly. Later that morning, I edited the talking points, then asked that both the DI and the NCS see them. I was particularly interested in making sure that [senior CIA official #1] was okay with them. From a substantive perspective [senior CIA official #1] was okay, although having heard the committee's discussion the previous day, [senior CIA official #1] noted concern that they might not go far enough for the committee. Late

Saturday morning, I then circulated the revised points to the National Security Staff, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the FBI, the Department of Justice, State, the National Counterterrorism Center, and NSA. Only minor changes were suggested and made. Director Petraeus then reviewed the points. Although he did not think the points were robust enough, he approved them, and they were delivered to the committee. We will walk through all of this in detail later, but I just wanted to put that blueprint on the table.

So allow me next to make some general comments about the talking points. First, I agree fully with those who say that the talking points were thin gruel. There was little meat. There was not much there. The fact that they were not more robust, however, was in no way due to White House political influence, State Department concerns about how the Department might be portrayed publicly, or any interagency bureaucratic battles. The fact that they were not more robust was a reflection of how little we knew at the time, a reflection of what officers inside and outside CIA thought needed to be protected, and a reflection of what I thought would be fair to say about what CIA had or had not previously warned. And more on that later.

Second, the talking points as initially drafted and as finalized for Congress were fully consistent with what the analysts had written at the time in classified products for senior policy officials and for Congress. At the time, we assessed, based on a number of reports, that a protest preceded the attacks outside the temporary mission facility. Just to make that clear, let me read a sentence from an IC-coordinated product that was produced on 13 September, one day before the talking points were drafted, and two days before I edited them.

So on September 13th we wrote, and I quote, and this is in a classified

~~TS//~~ [REDACTED] ~~/HCS/SI-G/TK/OC//NF~~

product, "We assess the attacks on Tuesday against the U.S. consulate in Benghazi began spontaneously following the protests at the U.S. embassy in Cairo, and evolved into a direct assault against the consulate and a separate facility in the city," unquote. The title of the section of this article that contained this sentence was, quote, "Extremists capitalized on Benghazi protests," unquote. This language is entirely consistent with the first and second sentences of the final unclassified talking points. As you all know, the judgment that there had been a protest ongoing at the time of the attack turned out to be wrong. And we changed it when new and more compelling information became available. At the same time, while we did indeed get the protest judgment wrong, three other core elements of our initial analytic line have held up over time and remain our view to this very day. And those are that individuals with links to al-Qa'ida and militia groups were involved in the attacks, that some of the attackers were inspired by protests that day in Cairo or by Zawahiri's call for Libyans to avenge the death of senior al-Qa'ida leader Abu Yahya al-Libi in Pakistan, and that the attacks did not require significant preplanning. We said those at the time, and we continue to believe those.

Third, and this is important, what we wrote in our classified publications for policy officials and for Congress, and what we wrote in the talking points could have been clearer in two regards. For one thing, the language in the first sentence of the talking points, and similarly the same language in our classified writings, lacked precision, and as a result caused confusion among readers. The language we used that the attacks spontaneously evolved out of the protests left the impression that this was a crowd run amok. That was not what the analysts believed then. What we believed then was that extremists took advantage of a protest to launch an attack on the TMF. And we were not clear about that. In addition, we should have used the

~~TS//~~ [REDACTED] ~~/HCS/SI-G/TK/OC//NF~~

word "terrorists" instead of the word "extremists." For analysts in the Intelligence Community, these two words are synonyms. What we did not realize was that for others they are not synonyms. And just to be clear, we used the word "extremists" in both our classified products as well as the unclassified talking points. So we were consistent on that point.

So let me now turn to the talking points themselves. By my count, there were 20 changes made to the talking points between the first draft produced by [senior CIA official #1] and the version that was ultimately sent to the committee. Some were purely stylistic, and others more substantive. Of the 20 changes, I think there were a half dozen that have raised questions. And I want to go through those half dozen in detail. As I do so, I am going to refer to the package of drafts that hopefully you have in front of you. This package shows you step by step all of the changes that were made and the times that each version was sent back around for coordination. So first, the group of CIA Public Affairs and Congressional Affairs officers who worked the talking points deleted the phrase "with ties to al-Qa'ida" in the second bullet of the original draft. You can see that on the third page of your package. The officers who made this change agree that they were focused on several considerations in doing so; namely, ensuring that the talking points contained no information that could compromise sources and methods, that nothing was said that could compromise the FBI investigation by prematurely attributing responsibility for the attacks on any one person or group, and finally, that the information pointing to any particular group was limited, and therefore we needed to be careful in talking in any certain terms about who was responsible.

Second, and this is also on the third page of your package, you will see that the same CIA officers changed the word "attacks" in the first bullet of the talking points to

"demonstrations." Participants in that editing session do not have a clear recollection as to why they made these changes, but they have suggested that they believe the sentence was illogical as written. Saying that attacks evolved into an assault did not make sense because attacks and assault are synonyms.

Third, and still on the third page of your package, in the sentence in the second bullet in which we talk about Islamic extremists at the TMF that night, instead of saying "they participated in the attacks," these same CIA officers changed it to say that the extremists participated in violent demonstrations. This change, which I admit was not elegant, was in response to a concern expressed by an NCS officer, and shared by [senior CIA official #1], that the original phrasing could be interpreted to suggest that we had direct evidence that it was the extremists who were definitely responsible for the deaths of the Americans. And at that point in time, we did not have such evidence.

MR. WESTMORELAND: Mr. Chairman? Can I ask Mr. Morell, who was present?

MR. THOMPSON: Use your microphone.

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's let him get through his presentation, and we will get you some time for questions. Thank you.

MR. MORELL: Fourth, the FBI requested, and CIA agreed, to change the second bullet in the draft that was sent around at 8:59 p.m. You can see this change on page eight. The FBI asked that we change, quote, "We do know Islamic extremists participated in the violent demonstrations," unquote, to, quote, "There are indications that Islamic extremists participated in the violent demonstrations," unquote. The FBI made this request to protect the investigation, although I would also note that the sentence as changed was more accurate. At that point, we really

did only have indications. We did not have enough intelligence to say with absolute certainty that we knew.

Fifth, the State Department requested, and CIA agreed, to delete the entire third bullet in the draft sent around at 8:59 p.m. You will also see that on page eight of your package. That bullet noted that initial press reporting had linked Ansar al-Sharia to the attack, but that the group had denied its members were involved. You can see that change in the third page of your package. Actually, I am not sure that is right. That is wrong. Forget what I just said. State deemed it premature to single out only one group, and CIA agreed, because the only unclassified evidence that existed was that Ansar al-Sharia -- was the Ansar al-Sharia claim of responsibility, which the group had retracted.

Finally, and sixth, I should note that the addition of the warning language in two places in the draft at the request of Director Petraeus -- it appears back on page three of your package, and the subsequent removal of that language by me which you will see on page nine -- I should note that State Department also advocated the removal of this language. But let me make a key point here. Even before I learned of State Department's concern, I had already made the decision to delete this language when it came to me for review. I will explain this more fully in a minute.

Indeed, let me now walk through my personal role in the talking points. And I want to be very precise here. Director Petraeus' Chief of Staff, [senior CIA official #2], was the first person to make me aware of your request for talking points sometime between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Friday the 14th. At the same time that [senior CIA official #2] made me aware of the request, [senior CIA official #2] showed me the draft of the talking points as they existed at that time. And that was after the internal CIA coordination review by officers from my Office of Public Affairs and Office

of Congressional Affairs. At that point, the draft contained the language added by the Director's office on the warnings. I immediately reacted to this language, telling [senior CIA official #2] that the language on the warnings was inappropriate. I felt the warning language was inappropriate for two key reasons. First, I worried that the language might lead to the misperception that the CIA had warned about the attack on September 11th itself, which we did not. And second, and most importantly, I simply felt that it was unprofessional and unfair to tell the public that CIA had provided warnings to State Department about the deteriorating security situation in Benghazi without saying what State Department did in response to those warnings. And when I made the deletion the next day, this is exactly what I was thinking. So early the next morning I learned from my staff that the State Department had concerns over the warning language, that the talking points were essentially stuck in limbo as a result, and that Mr. McDonough therefore wanted to discuss the talking points at the Deputies Committee SVTC, secure video teleconference, scheduled for Saturday morning. I mentioned this in passing to Director Petraeus, telling him that I agreed with State Department's concern. I do not recall his response. Near the end of the Deputies Committee meeting, which focused on the threats to our facilities throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, I raised the talking points. What I said, and what I believe is fairly close to verbatim, is that I was aware that there were some concerns in the interagency over the talking points, that I had concerns of my own, and that I would work on the talking points and circulate them to deputies for final coordination. In response, Denis McDonough simply said thank you. There was no further discussion at the Deputies Committee meeting on the talking points. This week I spoke with my former Executive Assistant, [senior CIA official #3], who was with me in the SVTC room, in the CIA SVTC room that morning, and [senior CIA

official #3 recollection is very similar to mine. A number of other participants in that meeting have told me the same. I am of course aware of the internal U.S.-U.N. -- the U.N. office -- our office at the United Nations, Ambassador Rice's office, of an internal U.S.-U.N. email that says that there was additional discussion at the Deputies meeting that included the notion that I would work with Ben Rhodes and Jake Sullivan on the talking points. That just did not happen. Indeed, there were no phone calls or any other communication between Jake, Ben, and me before I sent my reworked version back around for final interagency coordination.

THE CHAIRMAN: Can you just clarify who Jake and Ben are again, and where they --

MR. MORELL: So Ben Rhodes is and was at the time the Director of Communications for the National Security Staff. And Jake at the time was a Senior Adviser to Secretary Clinton, and is now the Vice President's National Security Adviser.

So just to repeat, there was no communication between the three of us before I sent around my reworked version for final interagency coordination. And their only comment back to me on that version was to each request that we change the word "consulate" to "diplomatic post," because the TMF was indeed not considered officially a consulate. I am also aware of the email that I wrote to [senior CIA official #4], our then-head of Congressional Affairs, after the full interagency coordination on the final draft. The purpose of that email was to send [senior CIA official #4] the final draft, ask [senior CIA official #4] to run it by the Director, and then send it on to the committee. You have probably seen that I wrote in that email that, and I quote, "I spoke to the Director earlier about State's deep concerns about mentioning the warnings and the other work done on this, but you will want to reemphasize in your

note to the Director." So this raises the obvious question, Michael, if you yourself believed the warnings should not be in the talking points, why did you ask [senior CIA official #4] to emphasize to the Director State Department's deep concerns? The reason is simple. I knew how strongly the Director wanted the warning language in the talking points. I think you can actually see that in his response to the final version of the talking points, where the first thing he writes is, quote, "No mention of the cable to Cairo either?," unquote. I wanted to make the most persuasive case possible with the Director for not including those warnings. He was already aware of my view, and I decided that emphasizing State's concerns would be more compelling to him.

One last point, Mr. Chairman, which I think is a good summary of my testimony. Were the talking points as good as they could have been? No, they were not. Was the process by which they were produced perfect? No, it was not. But were the talking points in any way politicized? No, they were not. In short, we produced the talking points imperfectly, but we produced them in good faith.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my opening statement, and I would be happy to answer as many as questions as I possibly can.

THE CHAIRMAN: Great. Thank you. Thank you for your candid presentation. There was a meeting between the CIA and State Department in August prior to the September 11th event talking about the possible merger of facilities. Can you talk about that?

MR. MORELL: I can't, but I am hoping that somebody behind me can. [senior CIA official #5]? This is [senior CIA official #5], my Director of Support. All of the security of CIA falls underneath [senior CIA official #5] writ.

[Senior CIA official #3]: Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning.

[Senior CIA official #5]: There was a meeting in August. In country, our teams may not be one team, but they certainly communicate with each other.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure.

[Senior CIA official #5]: In areas like Benghazi, where we are in nonstandard facilities, we are always looking to make sure that we have the best physical protection that we could. So we had meetings to discuss whether collocation on one compound or the other would make more sense to that. [REDACTED]

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. And what was the conclusion of that meeting about collocating at the facility?

[Senior CIA official #5]: From our perspective, us collocating at the temporary mission facility, they did not have the same security features that we did. They didn't have the same CCTVs. The guard forces that they used were unarmed, and we believed that the positioning was better at the Annex where we were.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right. So what would happen, what would be the normal course of a follow-up of that meeting? So you decided, or someone in your chain of command decided that that was not appropriate for the Agency to move to the facility or collocate because of their lax security concerns.

[Senior CIA official #5]: Well, and the fact that our profile. So remember that that was not an identified facility. It wasn't a recognized --

THE CHAIRMAN: You mean your facility, just to be clear.

[Senior CIA official #5]: Our facility was not. And so it raised the profile as well. So when we consider our posture worldwide, we are looking at three things: The physical location, the profile, and the relationship that we have with the local guard forces around us.

THE CHAIRMAN: I appreciate that. Thank you. So you tell the State Department guard force is a concern, the camera locations are a concern. We don't feel comfortable for a host of reasons, but not of which the least is it is not a very secure location.

[Senior CIA official #5]: Absolutely had these conversations.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So they had an understanding that your agency had concerns that it was not a secure facility, or at least it raised your level of --

[Senior CIA official #5]: That collocation for our purpose for our mission did not make sense at that time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

[Senior CIA official #5]: I would not speak to the actions that the State Department took or their assessment at the time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Right. And I am not concerned about their assessment. But your assessment was --

[Senior CIA official #5]: That it did not make sense for us at the time given the physical operational profile and the tradecraft.

THE CHAIRMAN: And some security concerns would be legitimate.

[Senior CIA official #5]: It is a combination.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. Great. Thank you.

Mr. Morell, on the September 15th Deputies meeting, were you at that September 15th Deputies meeting?

MR. MORELL: Yes. It was held by SVTC, so I was at CIA and I was SVTCing in. Most folks were. There were a handful of people in the sit room, but I was not physically there.

THE CHAIRMAN: Great. And who were the participants by agency?

MR. MORELL: You know, I don't remember, Mr. Chairman. I will have to come back to you on the record for that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Can you get us some information? I would assume that in a normal SVTC like that you would have State Department, somebody from the White House, FBI, DOJ, that kind of thing?

MR. MORELL: Absolutely. So, you know, in general we were doing at that point a SVTC every day, sometimes twice a day. What these Deputies meetings were focused on were all the protests and demonstrations happening throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. And we were intensely focused on what we needed to do to keep our facilities and our people safe. So it would have been White House officials, State Department officials, DOD officials, Department of Homeland Security, Vice President's office, ODNI, CIA. And I can get you the full list.

THE CHAIRMAN: Sure. That would be great. When it was scheduled, was the schedule of the September 15th meeting about the -- what was the nature of that?

MR. MORELL: So the focus, the purpose and focus was to again review our security posture across that entire region given what we were seeing in terms of demonstrations and protests.

THE CHAIRMAN: And that was the scheduled agenda for the meeting.

MR. MORELL: Yes, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: And did the Benghazi discussion come up?

MR. MORELL: So it only came up at the very end.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. And could you describe the nature of that?

MR. MORELL: Absolutely. So you remember I said in my testimony that I

had been told that Mr. McDonough wanted to discuss the talking points at the meeting. And so when we got to the end of the meeting, I was actually a little bit surprised that he hadn't. And Mr. McDonough, when he ran Deputies meetings, he would end every Deputies meeting by going around the room and asking people if they had anything else they wanted to say. So during his round robin he came to me and said, Michael, is there anything else? And that is when I raised the talking points. That is when I said what I said with regard to the talking points. So it was, you know, one-tenth of one percent of the discussion that took place at that Deputies meeting.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. And was there any offered conclusion to the talking points what they should include, what they should not include at that particular meeting?

MR. MORELL: No, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: So none of those discussions happened. So was it you just informing the meeting and no questions were followed up?

MR. MORELL: No questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did the CIA provide written materials or review written materials in advance of this particular meeting?

MR. MORELL: I don't remember if we did. I don't believe so, but I will check. Every morning at that point we were doing -- [senior CIA official #1] correct me if I am wrong -- we were doing an executive update that looked at the threats and demonstrations and protests everywhere in the world. So that was really the factual basis, the factual lay down for the Deputies meeting. Is that correct, [senior CIA official #1]?

[Senior CIA official #1]: I believe that is correct. And I believe we were also

doing talking points for you at like 6:30 in the morning every morning.

MR. MORELL: So there would have been talking points for me as well.

THE CHAIRMAN: For the meeting based on what the agenda was, but would have included something on the -- because you had a request on the Benghazi talking points. Is that -- do I understand that correctly?

MR. MORELL: I don't know whether there were talking points for me on the talking points. I can certainly check. Since I knew exactly what I wanted to say, I didn't ask for them. But we can check.

THE CHAIRMAN: Great. And no discussion at that point about who we believed or who you all believed at the time at the Deputies meeting may have been responsible for the Benghazi attack?

MR. MORELL: No, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would that be normal? It seems a little odd to me that you would have a Deputies meeting, a national security Deputies meeting and not have a conversation about who the perpetrators --

MR. MORELL: I would say two things. One is that wasn't the agenda. You know, the agenda really was the rest of the region and where we were now at risk. Benghazi had passed. And two, at that point the FBI was just beginning its investigation. And we were really just beginning, you know, our intelligence look at this. So the issue did not come up, and we did not offer anything, and neither did the Bureau.

THE CHAIRMAN: So there was no discussion about, hey, we just -- obviously, we had an attack on Benghazi. Is this group -- could they attack Tripoli? Could they attack our embassy in Tunisia? Actually, by the 15th there was an attack in Tunisia, was there not? I think it was the 13th.

MR. MORELL: [Senior CIA official #1], do you know?

[Senior CIA official #1]: I believe it was --

THE CHAIRMAN: I am sorry. Please identify yourself for the record as well.

[Senior CIA official #1]: [Senior CIA official #1]. I believe, sir, that the attack had occurred in Tunisia after, but I have to doublecheck on the date.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am pretty sure it was the 13th.

[Senior CIA official #1]: I think it was the 13th. Exactly.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So September 15th, I guess I am a little shocked that you wouldn't have -- so we have now had two attacks on our embassies, and none of that came up in the September 15th meeting?

MR. MORELL: I am not saying the attack on Tunisia didn't come up. I am saying there was -- according to my recollection, okay, this was a long time ago, according to my recollection I do not remember a discussion of what do we know about what happened in Benghazi.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I think you have answered the question. I will move on.

On November 15th, at a hearing here, it was specifically a question was asked of Director Clapper, actually by me, "Who removed the al-Qa'ida references from the talking points?" Mr. Clapper at that time said he did not know and would look into it. Is there a reason at that time you didn't feel comfortable volunteering your knowledge of the situation at that particular hearing?

MR. MORELL: Yeah. Very good question. This is a question that Senator Burr asked me as well, because when we did the same hearing for SSCI, Senator Burr actually went down the line and asked everybody that question. "Do you know who took out the al-Qa'ida reference?" And I said no. And the reason I said no was

because I didn't know at that time who took out the al-Qa'ida reference. You know, what happened to the talking points up until they got to me, I had no idea at that point. So that is why I said no to Senator Burr, and that is why I did not respond when you asked the question. Now, Senator Burr and I have actually talked about this. And his view, and I guess I share it, is that while I did not know, I should have then offered, "but I made a number of changes to the talking points later that day, and here is what they were." And so perhaps here I should have done the same thing, but I did not.

THE CHAIRMAN: Were you ever asked by the White House to provide a narrative on the talking points directly?

MR. MORELL: No, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: So no one from the White House directly contacted you --

MR. MORELL: No, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: -- from the Deputies meeting? Anyone? Good. At any time did you believe you were under any obligation to change the narrative of the talking points based on what you thought they wanted, or were you basing it purely on your analysis as a senior DI officer in the Central Intelligence Agency?

MR. MORELL: So I felt no pressure to change the talking points. And any change that we would have made to the talking points would have been changes that we would have had to agree to. And all the changes that were recommended by the other agencies we did indeed agree to. And had there been an issue that couldn't have been resolved at the working level, we would have worked it higher. So let's just assume for a moment that I agreed with Director Petraeus that that warning language should be in there. And so you have State Department saying it should come out and CIA saying it should be in, I would have called Bill Burns and worked that out. That's how that would have happened.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Did you ever have that conversation with the Director? You mentioned earlier that I think you believed the Legislative Affairs Director, [senior CIA official #4], at the time, [senior CIA official #4], recommended you have a conversation with the Director. Did you have that conversation?

MR. MORELL: Well, so this is the way it transpired. So when I came in on Saturday morning, I was told that the talking points were stuck, the talking points were stuck because of State Department's concerns about the warnings, and that Denis wanted, as a result, to talk about them at the Deputies meeting. Director Petraeus happened to be in that morning because it was family day at CIA. And I mentioned to him that the talking points were stuck. I mentioned to him that State Department had concerns about the warning language. I told him I shared those concerns. But again, I don't remember what his reaction was. I think we were actually walking to an event for family day. But there was not a long discussion between the Director and I about that point. So that was my only interaction with the Director. And at that point, at that point, Mr. Chairman, I had only shared my concerns about the warnings with [senior CIA official #2] and with some members of my staff. I had not reached out inside my agency to say, hey, look, I have deep concerns about these warnings. I had them, I shared them with [senior CIA official #2], I shared them with my staff, and my plan was to remove them when the talking points came to me.

THE CHAIRMAN: And you had none of those conversations with the State Department.

MR. MORELL: None.

THE CHAIRMAN: So the State Department never called you and said --

MR. MORELL: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: -- hey, Morell you have got to fix these talking points.

MR. MORELL: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: You never had that discussion.

MR. MORELL: No, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. I have more questions, but I know we have a lot of members that have questions. I am going to turn it over to Mr. Ruppertsberger.

MR. RUPPERSBERGER: Just following up a little bit on that. There have been allegations by certain Members that this was very political and this was done to help the election. Did you have any conversation with anyone at the White House other than meeting with McDonough at that Deputies meeting?

MR. MORELL: No, sir.

MR. RUPPERSBERGER: Do you know of anyone else in your agency or maybe State Department that would have had conversations with any representative from the White House concerning the political allegation that this was -- they were being changed for a political reason?

MR. MORELL: So let me just -- just no, I don't know of any. I did not and I don't know of any. But let me just be very clear, there were a number of interactions between State Department and the White House when these talking points were put together. The talking points as drafted by [senior CIA official #1] were initially sent to the White House for their information, for their review. And then they were withdrawn because they had not been internally coordinated inside CIA, according to the views of several of my officers. So that was one interaction. Then there was a second interaction when the finally internally coordinated version was sent to the White House. That was the second interaction. The third interaction was the Deputies meeting. And then the fourth interaction was when I sent the final version around for comment. But there was no discussion at any point about politics related

to these talking points.

MR. RUPPERSBERGER: Okay. And we are looking for facts and evidence. And based on my analysis of the emails at this point, I don't see that either. But if there are, I think we need to know. So you don't have any knowledge other than what you just testified to.

MR. MORELL: That is correct, sir.

MR. RUPPERSBERGER: Okay. The other thing, and I get teased about this or whatever, at the meeting with Petraeus I knew this was going to be a really aggressive media situation when an ambassador was killed. So I made the comment to Petraeus that the Members are going to get hit hard. We don't want to give out any classified information or sources and methods. Could we just have some basic talking points so that we made sure that we weren't interfering with the -- there is three points you put, interfering with the FBI, and sources and methods, and that type of thing. What boggles my mind is that this very small request turned out to be a massive bureaucratic issue. And I would think for the future -- I mean I would think you by yourself or one or two people on your staff should be able to follow through with a request that I asked. And then it went out to State Department, and this, and back, and four or five different times. I think the process really needs to be evaluated. I have called you numerous times when there were very sensitive information, sensitive political issues that were newsworthy, and have asked your opinion what are sources and methods there? What would help you in continuing what we need to do to get the bad guys so to speak?

Do you have an opinion -- and by the way, we are going to continue to have this. There will be issues after issues. And I think it is really important that we have the ability to ask for -- maybe we shouldn't -- it's just like earmarks. You know, we

had to change the name, it is something that if you do it the right way, you know, it allows the Members of Congress to follow through with their constitutional duties. The same thing here. We are a special committee. We have sensitive information. So do you have an opinion on how this got out of control and what we need to do in the future about this type of situation?

MR. MORELL: Yeah. Let me say a couple things. That is a very good question. First of all, I think there is some good news here. And that's to show how seriously we take requests from the committee.

MR. RUPPERSBERGER: I didn't want to create --

MR. MORELL: So that's a good thing. Secondly, we really felt that given that four Americans had died, and given that there was a criminal investigation beginning, that these talking points needed to be coordinated, particularly with the FBI and the Department of Justice. And we included others because they, they, they obviously had interests here. So I do think, as ugly as the process was, I do think it was important in the situation to coordinate, particularly with those two agencies. Now, like I said earlier, was this pretty? Was this done well? No. But I do think, sir, it was important to coordinate those outside the building. I will tell you that I do share the DNI's view that maybe we should not be in the business of writing unclassified talking points. Because, because we really -- we really don't know how to communicate with the American people. And that I would feel much more comfortable, much more comfortable with you all drafting what you would like to say and then us looking at it and saying, hey, this is classified, or that's classified, or, you know, this is not consistent with the analytic line at the moment. I would feel much more comfortable doing that. And I am not just talking about Congress in this case. I am talking about with a similar request from the executive branch I would feel much