

DS and Annex personnel on the ground in Benghazi performed with courage and an overriding desire to protect and rescue their colleagues, in a near impossible situation. The multiple trips that the DS agents and Annex security team members made into a burning, smoke-filled building in attempts to rescue Sean Smith and Ambassador Stevens showed readiness to risk life and limb to save others. . . . The Board members believe every possible effort was made to protect, rescue, and recover Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith, and that the bravery of the DS agents present in Benghazi helped prevent a further loss of life, particularly given their assistance in defending the Annex.⁶

Similarly, in January 2014, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issued its bipartisan report, concluding:

The Committee honors the lives and sacrifices of the four American heroes who died in Benghazi on September 11, 2012. We also recognize those who came to their aid or mobilized assistance in their defense.⁷

On April 2, 2014, Rep. Mike Rogers, the Republican Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, stated during a public hearing:

Many of the brave officers who came to the rescue testified in closed session before the committee. These men took extraordinary measures to save their fellow Americans. Without their courage, their skill, the terrorists would have killed other Americans in Benghazi that night for sure. Most of these silent warriors preferred to stay unnamed and many still defend America, in some of the most dangerous locations around the world.⁸

In November 2014, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence reached the same conclusion in its bipartisan report, finding:

CIA security personnel on the ground in Benghazi, Libya, during the attacks that began on September 11, 2012, exhibited bravery and tactical expertise, saving the lives of fellow Americans from the State Department under difficult conditions.⁹

1. RESPONSE OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY AGENTS

The Select Committee conducted transcribed interviews with four Diplomatic Security agents who were on the ground in Benghazi on the night of the attacks. These agents showed remarkable courage and fortitude during incredibly challenging circumstances. They worked swiftly to protect the Ambassador and defend the compound. Despite suffering from smoke inhalation, many of these agents continued to provide security at the CIA Annex.

All of these agents previously shared their accounts with the ARB. Their accounts supported the ARB's description of events, and they corroborated the account of the fifth DS agent on the ground that night, who testified previously in a closed deposition before the House

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and who was not re-interviewed by the Select Committee.

AGENT 1'S ACCOUNT

Agent 1, a U.S. Navy veteran, described the beginning of the attack from his perspective in Villa C of the State Department's Special Mission Compound (SMC) with the Ambassador and Sean Smith:

Okay, so the evening started with [Agent 2, Agent 3,] and I sitting at a table near the pool at the end of the night. Ambassador Stevens had come by and said, I'm going to bed. Sean Smith said the same thing and went, you know, went inside the villa, and we were just sitting out kind of relaxing at the end of the night.

While we were talking, I started hearing some kind of chanting, I thought it was. So I told the others, you know, I told the other two, hang on. Just listen for a minute. And what we heard was chanting. And it was my impression that it was coming closer. You know, so immediately when I realized, you know, that this is a potential security incident, or a potential something, I said, you know, go get your gear, right now. I ran into Villa C where the Ambassador and Sean Smith were and the other two ran in a different direction.

I remember hearing the chants. I mean, they were fairly close already. I mean, yelling distance, which is pretty close especially in a city setting. So my impression is that I don't have much time. So I ran right to my room, you know, put my helmet on, put my vest on, grabbed my weapons, my additional weapons, and I turned to lock the gate, and basically, it was a jail cell door with three locks on it. I locked all three locks.

And at about that time Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith were coming out of their rooms. Sean Smith was already, you know, donning his helmet and vest. I guided them both into the safe haven, and set myself up in the safe haven with—I was holding my M4. I had a pistol, a radio, a shotgun, and when we were, you know, when we were in there, I radioed to the other guy, hey, we are all in the safe haven.

I could hear outside explosions, yelling, chanting, screaming, gunfire, and I reported all of this on the radio just saying, this is what my senses are telling me. Then people started banging on the doors on the building, so I reported that. Hey, there is banging on the doors. They are trying to come in, you know, we need immediate assistance. And there wasn't any response on the radio.

Shortly after that, to my recollection, the doors were blown open. And about 70 individuals, you know, rushed into the building, all of them carrying AK-

47s, grenades, RPGs, you know, a mixture throughout everyone. Different—there were a couple of different assault rifles.

And with the number of individuals that came into the building versus me, I chose just to stay in the shadow that I was in. So I was partially in the safe haven, partially outside of the safe haven. The area was, you know, there was a big shadow where I was sitting, and my view through the jail cell door was into the common area. So I could see where everybody was going, and they began breaking everything. I could just hear glass breaking. I could hear stuff being thrown around. I could hear furniture being moved.

If I may just back up a little bit. When we made it into the safe haven, I handed my cell phone to the Ambassador. I said, call everybody on my cell phone. Call everybody that you know that can help us. ...

And then slowly, people started to kind of trickle out. And then the lights started to kind of dim. My initial response, or my initial thought was, well, they just knocked out the generators. You know, we have regular city power, but we also have backup generators. So flickering would be a likely, you know, cause of this. But in reality, it was smoke. And it took me about, you know, 2 or 3 seconds after that to determine that it was smoke.

As soon as I realized it was smoke, I turned to the Ambassador and Sean Smith and I said, we are moving to the bathroom. And at that time, grabbed the Ambassador, Sean Smith was right behind him and we started crawling towards the bathroom. It's about a 3- to 4-meter crawl. And it only took seconds for us to reach—to reach the hallway that the bathroom was in. But by that time—seconds later, the smoke had already filled the entire room and I began basically army crawling like on my belly, and breathing through my hands like this, the last, you know, centimeter of air that was left.

And as soon as it became that thick, no light was visible from the lights that were fully on. The sounds were, you know, crackling and breaking of things from the heat. And so to lead them to the bathroom, I was saying, come on guys, follow me. And I was slapping my hands on the floor, or you know, hitting stuff with my hands if I felt anything.¹⁰

The agent explained that he made it to the bathroom, but the Ambassador and Sean Smith did not. As he started to lose consciousness, he proceeded to a bedroom where he could open the window to exit the building:

And as soon as I passed the threshold to my bedroom, you know, I had seconds left of life, essentially. And so I quickly went over to my window and I started to crank open these metal shutters, but I was cranking the wrong way. So I had to turn back and crank it the other way. Then I had to open up a glass window, and then I had to pull a pin and push out this big metal gate. And as soon as I did that, I collapsed on to my little patio area.

And around the patio area was, you know, maybe a 2-1/2-foot tall cinderblock wall. And as soon as I went out there, I just started taking fire immediately. I remember hearing explosions, which I equate to grenades. I remember feeling the cement exploding and hitting me in the face. And I remember the sounds. So after catching my breath, I jumped back into the building, and I searched for the Ambassador and Sean Smith. I went as far as my threshold, and reached out into the—into the area we had just come from to see if I could feel anybody. But the smoke and heat were so intense that, I mean, the smoke was coming in through my eyes, even though they were closed. It was coming in through my nose. And I stayed in there until I physically couldn't do it anymore.

When I was in the Navy, they engrain in you, 110 percent. And most people don't think you can do 110 percent, but it's part of my character. I do 110 percent and I stayed in there until—until I physically could not and mentally could not stay in there any longer.¹¹

The agent described going back into the building repeatedly:

The last time I went out, you know, I decided that if I went back into the building that I wasn't going to come back out. The smoke and heat were way too powerful, and way too strong, and it was extremely confusing feeling my way in a smoke-filled building. And I didn't want to get lost, and so I decided to climb up the ladder up to the roof.

I climbed up the ladder, and pulled up the ladder behind me and that's the moment that I knew that Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith were probably dead. Immediately, upon getting up to the roof, I started radioing for my colleagues, you know, telling them the situation, you know, telling them my situation, you know, I am exhausted. I am completely exhausted. I gave everything I had. And I'm still thinking of ways to help, still thinking of ways to get the guys out.¹²

After Agent 1 tried unsuccessfully to break a skylight on the roof, other agents arrived to help. Despite severe smoke inhalation, Agent 1 explained that he continued to defend the perimeter of the building while other agents and Annex security personnel continued to search for the Ambassador.

After arriving at the Annex, the DS agents joined other personnel and joined in the defense of the Annex. Agent 1 described how he took up a fighting position at the main gate of the Annex:

So I get up, and basically I say, you know, give me a weapon. I'm back in the fight. I get up. I get an M4. I can, you know, I can barely stand, but I can still think. I can still, you know, I can still fight. And I go sit by the main door of the Annex building that we were in. So I could see the main gate, in case anybody came over the main gate.¹³

After a mortar attack struck the Annex, he explained he assisted with emergency medical care for the wounded:

They also brought [Annex Security Team Member 3] in, and, you know, part of my job in the military as you know, combat search and rescue, when you rescue somebody, you know, you can do the whole med stuff afterwards. We can stabilize them until we get them back to a proper location.

And so I went to work right away with [Agent 4] and [Agent 2]. And we worked really hard on him and I have to tell you, you know, to be doing tourniquets, and to be comforting somebody, and that somebody is, you know, your really good friend and colleague, it is pretty hard to do. But you know, it had to be done. And we did it.¹⁴

AGENT 2'S ACCOUNT

Agent 2, a U.S. Army veteran, was making his rounds in the Benghazi compound at the time of the attack and described the attack from his perspective:

I left the TOC [Tactical Operations Center] to make my rounds to kind of just walk around the perimeter and just kind of get a general sense of how things were going. And I got to Villa C, where the other agents were all sitting. They were all outside Villa C. And we had a—we talked for a bit. And then I heard a scream or like a cry from the main gate.

And, of course, you know, that was unusual and it set all of our hair on end. We, I think, both—we all had an understanding that something was off. Very shortly after that, we saw—very shortly after that, the main gate had been breached. And so, after we heard this cry, we set into motion our react plan. [Agent 1] went into the villa to secure the villa. We acted according to our roles and responsibilities as we set forth in the react plan.

So [Agent 1] went in to lock down the Villa C. [Agent 4] and [Agent 3] went off to the cantina to equip themselves and to barricade in place. And then I made my way back to the TOC. It was at that point, since Villa C and the main gate are fairly close together, I had a view of the main gate area, and I could see people starting to stream in, attackers starting to stream in.

I was armed at that time. I decided not to open fire on them. I thought that it would be prudent to stay with the plan and that, if I were to open fire on them, it probably—I felt that that wasn't a wise tactical decision. I would probably be overwhelmed pretty quickly. So I made my way back to the TOC. As I was headed back to the TOC, I called in on the radio and initiated our—formally initiated our attack/react. I called three times, attack/react. It was then the IDNS [Imminent Danger and Notification System] alarm system started going off.¹⁵

He explained that he joined another agent in the TOC, barricaded the door, contacted the Annex, and attempted to contact their internal February 17 Quick Reaction Force (QRF) for assistance:

A: Agent [5] was already monitoring CCTV. He was getting into contact with Command Center. I used our dedicated radio to spin up our assets and the Annex to inform them that we were under attack. In addition, I attempted to get in contact with our QRF elements via our established communication lines, our cell phone lines. Unfortunately, I couldn't get into contact with them.

Q: And why was that? Was it because the call didn't go through, or no one picked up?

A: It was the—no one picked up on that line. I don't know exactly what happened on their end. The cabana is fairly close to the main gate as well. And I don't know exactly what happened, where the breakdown was with our communications. In addition, I don't know how they reacted to the attack.¹⁶

He explained that he asked the Annex to reach out to the February 17 force for help:

And so because I couldn't reach our QRF element inside, I went back to our connection in the Annex to ask them to spin up the 17 February Brigade's assets to respond to the compound. The Annex also had a liaison with the militia and were able to contact them and to request assistance, and so I asked them to relay our message.¹⁷

He explained the location of the Ambassador and the steps he took when the fire started:

Well, according to our react plan, the management officer and the Ambassador, along with Agent [1] would hold in a safe room. This is kind of a storage closet that we had in the center of the safe haven, probably the safest place available to us on compound. And shortly after I noticed—shortly after I saw that Villa C was on fire, I saw—I tried to reach out to [Agent 1]. This is about the time that our communications are degrading. It's becoming a very chaotic environment. There's a lot of gunfire, of course. We're receiving gunfire in the TOC as well as he's receiving gunfire as well.

And, once I start to have trouble, I get—I do eventually get in contact with [Agent 1] but the type of things—my communications with him were very troubling because he seemed, from the quality of his voice and the things that he's telling me are troubling to me, like he's, you know, he's dealing with the effects of the smoke and the flame. And so, in addition, he is—both he and [Agent 3], who I'm communicating with on the radio, are very—are asking me very insistently about when is our reaction force coming, when are the 17 February guys. By this time, I had already asked the Annex to spin up their reaction force and send them in, but they're, you know, they're taking time.

So they're very insistently asking when this help is coming, and I don't have an answer for them.

And so, following this kind of troubling communication I have with [Agent 1], I make the decision that I'm going to go ahead and break from the plan. And I decide to leave the TOC, and my plan is to meet up with [Agent 3] and [Agent 4] in the cantina and break them out. And then together we'll take one of the armored vehicles to Villa C and attempt to relieve [Agent 1], the Ambassador, and Smith.

I pick what I feel is an opportune moment. I scan with the cameras and see that in the immediate courtyard outside of the TOC building, I don't see any movement or any enemies, and so I decide that I'm going to go ahead and go out. I go out. [Agent 5] barricades the TOC behind me, and then I make my way tactically up to the cantina. And I clear my way to the cantina. I don't encounter any resistance.

And then I tell—and then eventually I find the room that [Agent 4] and [Agent 3] have barricaded them themselves in, and I gain entry to that room. I tell them. Let me in. I identify myself. And so we go in there. I inform them of the situation, and now that we're face to face, it's much easier to communicate the facts of what's going on. And I say, you know, Let's go; we've got to go and help [Agent 1].¹⁸

After a short time, they were able to regain contact with Agent 1, who was on the roof of Villa C, and learned that he had lost contact with Ambassador Stevens. Agent 2 explained:

At the same time, I can hear in the background and he informs me that he's under fire; they're firing at him from the ground to the roof. And so I make my decision again, and I convince the guys to come. We're all going to go out and implement my plan. We get into the armored vehicle and make our way over to the other side of the compound.

At this time, as providence would have it, the [Annex Security Team] guys are contacting the attackers outside the compound. And I'm not sure exactly if the February 17 response force is also arriving or if they arrive later, but nevertheless, the attackers are withdrawing under that contact and so, by the time we reach Villa C, they have withdrawn, and we are able to take up a position right outside the safe-haven exit escape hatch.

I call out to [Agent 1], and I bring him down from the roof, and he is visibly shaken. You know, he is suffering. I'm not a doctor, but he is suffering from some type of smoke inhalation, in my opinion. And so we put him into—the we sit him down into the armored vehicle, and [Agent 3] stays behind with the armored vehicle in the driver's seat, in case we need to make a quick getaway. And then [Agent 4] and I link up with the members of the [Annex Security Team], and we position ourselves outside of the safe-haven escape hatch, and

then I doff my equipment. I go into the safe haven with the intention of recovering Smith and Stevens.

Immediately upon entering the safe haven, it becomes very clear to me that it would be a very—that would be very difficult. The smoke is extremely thick and acrid. From what I understand now, that was a result of the accelerants used to start the fire. But open flame is not so much an issue; it's the volume and the toxic nature of the smoke that made it very difficult. Even immediately entering the room, I became very disoriented.

But using my internal map, my memory of the layout of the safe-haven area, I make my way along the wall searching and feeling my way. I make my way into the safe-haven closet, the safe room, where, according to our plan, everyone would've been staged. And I don't find anybody in there. I go and make sure that—I go and work my way around the wall to the gate, the locked gate of the safe haven itself. And I'm able to confirm that the gate is still locked. It was locked by padlock from the inside. So I can make the assumption that nobody has entered the safe haven and nobody has left. So that limits the search area.

So I continue to search. I just kind of follow along the walls, calling out to the Ambassador and Smith, and doing my best to feel around for them.¹⁹

He continued:

[T]here was no visibility. So I was just trying to feel with my limbs, my hands and feet, and still maintain contact with the wall so that I wouldn't lose myself. But, nevertheless, I started to feel very disoriented myself. I started to be worried that, you know, I was really craving oxygen by that point, and I eventually found myself in the bathroom. I broke a window out to try and ventilate the space and to get some fresh air for myself. And I cleared my head a little bit.²⁰

He described that he found and recovered the deceased body of Sean Smith and continued the search for the Ambassador:

And we took turns trading off going in and out and allowing one to rest while the other went in. Eventually, we came up with the idea to kind of tie each other off, like tether each other so that we would reduce the risk of one of us becoming a casualty and being lost. But we were unable to find Ambassador Stevens. I was very—at that point, I think I had decided that this was probably a recovery mission. We were looking to recover his body. Some time had passed. I'm not sure exactly how much. But it became apparent—and some of the 17 February Brigade members started to become very agitated, and one of them came to me and kind of indicated to me that we needed to leave. And I told him to get away. I was determined that we were going to find Ambassador Stevens' body. But, shortly after that, one of the Annex guys explained to me that they had information that the attackers were massing for a

counter assault, and it was at that point we made the decision to call off the search and evacuate the compound.²¹

Agent 2 explained to the Select Committee that, upon arrival to the Annex, “at that point, we—the DS agents, we integrated ourselves into the Annex’s security plan and took up positions on the roofs to prepare for a possible attack.”²²

Agent 2 took a fighting position on one of the roofs and suffered serious injuries as part of the mortar attack.

AGENT 3’S ACCOUNT

Agent 3, an Army veteran who previously served in two combat deployments to Iraq, traveled to Benghazi as the head of the Ambassador’s security detail. He was outdoors talking to other agents when the attack began:

At a certain point we started to hear some noise, which at that time didn’t really stand out, but it started to get louder. It seemed like it was getting closer. And then at one point I remember hearing like what I would describe as kind of an explosion or loud crash or something. And at that point everybody went to react. Specifically I went from [Villa] C down to the TOC to try to secure the Ambassador because that’s the last place I had remembered seeing him. When I realized that he wasn’t there, I moved across the cantina to secure my body armor and my M-4. While I was in there, another agent, [Agent 4], came in. We decided that we would move back together once he secured his equipment to Villa C to secure the Ambassador. By the time he secured his equipment and we went to move out, we left the cantina.

We turned the corner essentially, and there was a large number of armed Libyans. And we made the decision to go back into the cantina, lock the door, and barricade ourselves in a room. At that time there was a local guard member who was in there with us. Once we were in the room, [Agent 4] started making phone calls to the command center to apprise them of the situation, and I started calling the TOC in Tripoli to inform them of what was going on.

Generally, not too long after that, we heard the people make entry into the cantina where we were at. And throughout that period of time, we were trying to radio coms with the TOC, communicating to the TOC where we were, so we could have a rough estimate of where the Americans were on the compound and relay that information off to both Washington, to Tripoli, and allowing [Agent 5] to relay that information off to either 17th Brigade and the Annex for support.

At, I can’t remember exactly when it was, but at a certain point I heard on the radio, we heard that they had started setting fires, and at one point we heard [Agent 1] say that the building was on fire and that he was being shot at.

Shortly thereafter, once it looked like things were clear, [Agent 2] said that he was coming over. We came together, and we talked about, we very quickly talked out a plan on how we could get from where we were over to Villa C to secure [Agent 1], the Ambassador and Sean. We decided that we would take one of the up-armored vehicles and essentially drive it up to the door, and then we would make entry into the house and try to secure everybody.

By the time we got there, the building was on fire. There was lots of smoke. We were able to find [Agent 1] relatively quickly. We put him back in, and then through the field there were a large number of armed Libyans coming in, but one of the [Annex Security Members] stood out. Once we identified that was a friendly force, then we reported the location of the Americans that we had accountability of to the TOC, and then we started trying to make entry into the building to secure both the Ambassador and Sean.

Several attempts were made to go in, but the smoke was really bad, so not a lot, we couldn't make it very far into the building. At one point we drove back to the TOC to try to get some gas masks to go in. By the time we got back, [Agent 2] had gone through with [Agent 4], and they were in the building, and they found Sean Smith's body, which they passed out of a window to me and one of the [Annex Security] members. I took Sean's pulse. He wasn't breathing. There was no obvious signs of life, so we continued to go and try to secure the Ambassador.²³

In an exchange with Rep. Westmoreland, Agent 3 explained his tactical decision not to fire at the attackers in the SMC:

Q: Had you all been told prior to that, you know, don't play offense, just play defense?

A: No, sir. I feel now, and I felt then at the time that I had the support. At that time there was not an opportunity to shoot. There was a situation, it was a moment where it was myself and [Agent 4], and we were very close quarters with an overwhelming force of armed combatants, and at that situation it would not have been the smart thing, it would not have been the tactical thing to fire your weapon at that time.

Q: If you had had different equipment, different weapons, would that have made a difference?

A: Not in that specific situation. Now, would it have been nice in an environment like that to have some sort of light to medium machine gun, yes, it would, but in that particular situation, being attacked as quickly as we were, that type of stuff would not have been useful at the time.²⁴

After travelling to the Annex, Agent 3 joined the defense of the Annex by taking up a position on one of the roofs:

Once we arrived at the Annex, [Agent 4] initially went to an overwatch position with the remainder of the [Annex Security] members on one building. [Agent 2] went to another building. And I went inside with [Agent 5] and [Agent 1]. ... Maybe 5, maybe 10 minutes later, we got radio confirmation that the Annex team who was following us were coming back in, so I went out to the street to provide security so that they could come in. And after that, I replaced [Agent 2] on the roof of one of the buildings for the overwatch position, because he had cut himself when he was trying to crawl on the floor to get into the Villa C for the Ambassador.

I stayed on the roof of that building for the majority of the night. I made several phone calls back and forth to the DS Command Center in D.C. relaying information. I also made phone calls to one of the Ambassador's contacts to try to get some atmospheric information about what was going on in the rest of the city, should we need to do a ground evac. Sometime during the night we got information from a team that Tripoli was flying down. We got wheels-down confirmation. But it took them several hours to make it from the airport to our location because of the—because of what was going on in the city at the time. And then shortly after morning prayer is when the mortar attacks started.²⁵

Agent 3 explained that he was coming down from one of the roofs when the mortar attack occurred:

Q: Where were you physically located when that occurred?

A: Before the mortar attacks happened, it was just before they happened, we, the team from Tripoli had arrived at the Annex. They were replacing us on our overwatch positions, and I was coming down the ladder off of the roof when the first mortar round landed.

Q: So you had spent most of the evening on the roof?

A: Yes.

Q: And when the team from Tripoli came, you were leaving to go down off the roof?

A: Yes.

Q: So when the first attack came, were you still outside?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you on [the] ladder or were you on firm ground?

A: Yes, I was on a ladder about halfway up when the first mortar round came, like I fell from about halfway up the ladder to the ground.²⁶

Agent 3 explained the medical care for the wounded:

We can—there was—I mean, there were a couple of injured from the mortar attacks. [Agent 2] was one of them. The other was one of the [Annex Security Team] members. And very quickly upon bringing them in, people started rendering aid. I will say, one of the things that diplomatic security does well is their medical training, and as part of high threat was a tactical care course, which, at least from my perspective, was a very good comprehensive course and was also a very good refresher for me of combat care that I received in the Army. So I found those things to be extremely helpful. Tremendous efforts were made to control bleeding, splint injuries, give morphine, and then both the Embassy support staff in Tripoli who met the airplane and then the doctors in Tripoli, in my opinion, were, you know, they saved [Agent 2's] leg.²⁷

AGENT 4'S ACCOUNT

Agent 4, a U.S. Army veteran and former Department of Defense (DOD) explosives contractor who had traveled with the Ambassador from Tripoli, explained that they were monitoring the protests in Cairo and were cognizant of the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, but that they were not aware of any specific threats:

We had talked about it [the protests in Cairo]. One of the concerns—pretty much it was general consensus I think was, you know, just to monitor the situation. You know, I wasn't going to go to sleep that night. I was probably going to stay up throughout the night just because, one, it's September 11, you know, and what was happening in Egypt. So if anything was to happen, it would happen late at night, early morning. ...

I would say the ARSOs [Assisted Regional Security Officers] spoke to the [Redacted]. ... [T]here were no specific threats, same general threats. Benghazi is a dangerous place.²⁸

He described the attack from his perspective:

Q: And how did you find out about the attack?

A: I heard a loud explosion and chanting outside.

Q: When you say chanting, what would be—

A: Yelling, screaming.

Q: Okay.

A: I couldn't make out exactly what was said. You know, I don't know what's memory and what's me just filling in the blanks.

Q: Could you tell whether or not the chanting or the yelling came from inside the SMC [Special Mission Compound] walls or outside of the SMC walls?

A: Inside, very close. You could tell. It was almost as if someone was outside that door yelling.

Q: Could you understand anything that they were yelling or chanting?

A: I don't speak Arabic.

Q: What was your first action or reaction when you heard the chanting and yelling?

A: To move. So we all—I stood up, heard the explosion, everyone kind of looked at each other real quick, and then everyone started moving. There was no real discussion about what people were going to do. I think everyone knew what they needed to do. So I did hear [Agent 1] say, I have the Ambassador. And then he moved in that direction. Myself, [Agent 3], and [Agent 2] all left the back of the villa to head to Villa B and office and the TOC to retrieve weapons—I went to retrieve my weapon.²⁹

He described how an unarmed Libyan Blue Mountain guard approached him and another agent, he secured the guard in the closest building, the cantina, and then he and the other agent attempted to go the Ambassador's villa, but met resistance and ultimately barricaded themselves in a bedroom in the cantina:

I came back, secured the guard, and me and [Agent 3] started to—we were about to make our way back to the Ambassador's villa. At this point you didn't hear a lot of noise. I didn't hear any yelling or screaming or chanting. It seemed like everyone was just trying to get their bearings. And then I saw someone in the alleyway. So there was an alleyway that separated—this was essentially like this big compound. It used to be two compounds, so the alleyway separated the two, and the only way to get to the Ambassador's side, the Charlie side, was through the alleyway, which is big enough for a vehicle.

So while I was going to make my way back, before I could make it off the landing, we saw an individual inside the alleyway. It was pretty dark. I could not see a weapon. So I really quick, half-second, probably a glance at [Agent 3], I said, quick nod, I said, is that our guy, while I was trying to keep visual contact of this gentleman in the alleyway. And he says, I don't know. So at that point, right after that, I saw about, I would say, between to me it was 7 and 10, and those were behind him, coming kind of behind him in sort of a wave, where I saw weapons, and I could make out AKs and RPGs. ...

I yelled to [Agent 3] to get in the building, because I knew what I could see, but I didn't know what else was around me. So it is a pretty large compound,

and we are in the middle, essentially, of the compound. Everything behind us was an ocean, pretty dark. I didn't know where they were coming from. So it is essentially kind of in the open. Best place to defend from is inside the building.³⁰

He explained his decision not to shoot at the attackers at that point:

So for me from that point being in that compound, such a large compound, at this point with just two of us, myself and [Agent 3] in the open, for us to engage, that really put everyone at risk. Because if, say, I couldn't finish the fight if there were more than seven, then I become a liability. And then it kind of escalates after that. So, again, even though hope is [not a] course of action, the hope would be that if I don't engage and we can bunker, that gives us time to wait for maybe the response if it is within 15 minutes, or it gives them some opportunity, maybe they wanted to destroy the place and leave. But I knew at that moment and had I engaged and killed one of them, they more than likely would not leave until everyone was dead.³¹

Ultimately, he and the other agent were joined by a third agent, and they all proceeded to the Ambassador's Villa C, which was under fire and filled with smoke:

Q: How many times would you say you personally went in the window to search for them and back out?

A: I would say a dozen, you know. Well, we had searched, and then at some point I decided to try to get a gas mask and not to—you know, carbon monoxide will still kill you with a gas mask, a military-style gas mask, but it was mainly just to filter out the smoke, the soot, because it would shut your throat, and you couldn't see, couldn't even really open your eyes. So that was primarily the reason we went to go get a gas mask. And we may have gone in a few times prior to that, and then when we came back, at least a dozen times. ...

Q: And were you able, when you were in trying to locate the Ambassador, were you able to breathe or were you holding your breath the entire time that you went in?

A: You couldn't breathe, so you'd hold your breath and go in, and with the gas mask you'd take real shallow breaths, you know, kind of keep it away from your face, take shallow breaths as best as you could.

Q: How would you describe the visibility inside the building?

A: Almost as if you had your eyes closed. You really couldn't see in front of your face. If you had your hand inside the room—so there were two rooms, you walked into the main bedroom and you'd try to go into the adjacent rooms, one where the window we were accessing, you could see somewhat. It was really obscure, but you could see. But then once you

went into the main hallway to where the Ambassador should have been, you couldn't see anything. You couldn't see your hand in front of your face.³²

The agent explained the impact of continued scrutiny of the attacks over the years on himself and his family in the following exchange with Ranking Member Cummings:

Q: Can you share with us how continued attention to the attack affected you, your family, and the DS—your DS colleagues?

A: As far as my colleagues, I don't know exactly how they feel about it. But for myself, looking at it after talking to the ARB, I felt that most of the detail—everyone went in there and spoke the truth, gave all the relevant facts, everything that they needed to say. So it's sometimes disheartening that the continued scrutiny and sometimes the criticisms of our actions, when our actions were in the best intentions, and everything we did was in protection of the ambassador can sometimes be a little bit disheartening. But it's good to see that there are people who are supportive and working to get to the truth and make sure that the narrative is written the right way.³³

2. RESPONSE OF ANNEX PERSONNEL

The Select Committee conducted transcribed interviews with 10 CIA personnel who were on the ground in Benghazi throughout the night of the attacks. They showed courage and heroism in their resolve to rescue their fellow Americans in the Special Mission Compound (SMC), their defense of the Annex compound, and their successful evacuation of Americans from Benghazi to Tripoli.

Six of these individuals shared their accounts previously with the ARB, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. For example, in November 2014, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence issued its report, finding:

[T]he Annex security team joined State Department officers and helpful members of the February 17th Brigade in fighting the attackers at the TMF [State Department's Temporary Mission Facility]. The team repelled sporadic gunfire and RPG fire while assembling all remaining U.S. personnel at the TMF. The security officers were able to retrieve the body of Sean Smith, but they were unable to locate Ambassador Stevens. After 90 minutes of repeated attempts to enter the burning Villa C to search for the Ambassador, officers assessed that the security situation had deteriorated, and they were forced to abandon their search for the Ambassador in order to save the remaining U.S. personnel.³⁴

Similarly, in January 2015, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issued its report, finding:

Although there was no formal written agreement about how security should be handled between the two facilities in Benghazi, there was a common understanding that each group would come to the other's aid if attacked, which is what happened the night of September 11, 2012. IC personnel immediately came to the aid of their colleagues at the Temporary Mission Facility, and fought bravely to secure TMF personnel and their own Annex facility. The Committee interviewed U.S. personnel in Benghazi that night, and they credited their lives being saved to the personnel who responded to the attacks.³⁵

In his interview with the Select Committee, CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell stated:

There is another piece of the CIA that I think—that I want to say, right, and that is that in this whole Benghazi story that my guys on the ground that night, in my view, were absolute heroes, that my guys who went from Benghazi base to the TMF and my guys who went from Tripoli to Benghazi saved lives. And a lot more people would have died without my guys acting with the bravery that they did. And I don't want that lost ever, ever, ever.³⁶

CHIEF OF BASE AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF BASE

On September 19, 2012, a cable was sent containing a joint report from the Chief of Base in Benghazi and the Chief of Station in Tripoli that was “based on the first-hand accounts” of personnel directly involved in the events that night. The Chief of Base concluded: “Extraordinary heroism, skill, and judgment on the part of [CIA Security Teams] and [DOD] operators saved the lives of CIA and State officers in Benghazi.”³⁷

On the same date, the Deputy Chief of Base drafted a Memorandum for the Record, concluding:

The actions of the six Base [Security Team] personnel, who entered this situation without hesitation and with the full knowledge they were outnumbered and out-gunned, was a heroic action. This team's professionalism in recovering successfully the ARSO personnel, conducting repeated searches for the Ambassador in extremely hazardous conditions, entering a building fully involved in smoke and fire while taking fire, was an incredible act of bravery. This same group then established effective, sustained defense against superior forces attempting to attack our Base, and deterred these attacks successfully. [The Team Leader]'s conduct throughout the 11-12 SEP recovery operation and subsequent attacks was exemplary.³⁸

The memorandum strongly praised the Annex personnel:

[A]ll members of the Base staff performed to the highest possible level, continuing to collect intelligence, provide reporting, attend to the wounded,

account for sensitive equipment and funds, support base defense, and successfully execute destruction procedures. There were no/no examples of officers panicking or losing composure, even following the mortar attack. It was a privilege to serve with this team of officers.³⁹

The Select Committee interviewed the Benghazi Chief of Base, who stated:

I mean, to me, it was one of the bravest and more courageous things I have ever seen or heard of them going over there. And I mean, to go without any plan, basically, to go into harm's way without a lot of information to me was going to be a very dangerous and risky operation on their part.⁴⁰

He added: "I think that, in many ways, we owe our lives to them, and the fact that—in many ways, as with the—even with the tragic loss of life that night, it could have been far worse."⁴¹

The Select Committee also interviewed the Benghazi Deputy Chief of Base, who stated: "I have the utmost respect for their capabilities, their heroism, what they did that night. I'm alive today because of their efforts, and I never forget that for a minute."⁴²

The Deputy Chief of Base described the actions of Annex personnel:

Everybody kept their stuff together, everybody stayed focused on the mission, at the job at hand, either contacting their agents or preparing for the destruction of the classified equipment and holdings that we had there, trying to locate the Ambassador, providing first-aid and medical assistance to people when the only two trained medical people that we had were both killed.⁴³

He also stated:

But despite the severity of the injuries in the wounded people there, people who had never imagined that they would have to deal with something like this just jumped right into it and did what they could to help. Even after the mortar attack, there was no hysterics. Nobody lost control. Nobody was laying on the floor cowering, saying, you know, we are all going to die. I mean, it was very professional, very tight, very held together. Everybody was working towards a common goal there. And really everybody involved, given the circumstances, handled themselves with remarkable calm and distinction.⁴⁴

TEAM MEMBER 1'S ACCOUNT

The Select Committee conducted an interview of Annex Security Team Member 1 who described what he found when he arrived at the Special Mission Compound:

We ran to the main building of Villa C, I believe is what it is, and you can see hot embers, coals, smoke, feel the heat.

Standing outside the landing to one of the bedrooms was [DS Agent 2] and [DS Agent 1]. They were very haggard looking, and I describe [DS Agent 1] as looking like a chimney sweep because he had soot all over his face and he was barefoot. You could tell they had been in that burning building for a little while or at least, you know, searching or, you know, whatever.

So Ty and I immediately started going in ourselves. They told us there are still guys inside. We started going into the bedroom. We started going into that bedroom that they were standing next to first. The heat was extremely—it was the most extreme heat I've ever felt. You could barely take a breath or two in there before you had to come back out.

And we just tried hitting different corners of the room at first, going in, coming out, coughing, getting some fresh air, going back in, trying to hit a different spot. Then we started going into different entrances of the building, went through the front entrance, tried to make our way down into the living room. So that happened for a while, while the other guys were coming into the compound.⁴⁵

He explained how they retrieved Sean Smith's body and continued the search for Ambassador Stevens:

And then at some point, two guys appeared out of a back room, the second room back from one of the first rooms that you see, dragging a body out that was—they were both wearing gas masks. And they dragged the body over to me. I took him out of the room, laid him down, checked his vitals. That was Sean Smith. He was dead at the time that I found him.

And then we went back into the buildings trying to hit—at this point, there's Libyans and, you know, more of our guys are there and everybody is going in. There's people everywhere looking for the Ambassador.⁴⁶

Annex Security Team Member 1 described how the team departed the Special Mission Compound:

State Department were all at their vehicle. They all got in their vehicle. And our guys were still kind of scattered about the building. That's when the attack from the south gate happened. They fired an RPG and AK-47 rounds. At that point, that's when State Department vehicle left. They went out the north gate, turned right, and were ambushed on the way back to the Annex.

We stayed at the State Department compound a little bit longer to fight off the attack, and then finally, we rounded up all our guys and we left. We turned left out of the north gate, drove to our compound without incident. And once we arrived, we all went to our predesignated fighting positions and maintained a defensive posture until we were attacked again.⁴⁷

TEAM MEMBER 2'S ACCOUNT

Annex Security Team Member 2 described the intensity of the fire and the team's repeated rescue attempts:

It was completely on fire. I mean, the moment we—because they have like a foyer, I guess. They had double doors. By the time we made it to the second door, you were just completely sweating. I mean, it was instant. It was so hot. You couldn't see the end of your gun, even with the flashlight on; the smoke was so thick. I kind of knew the layout because I'd been in there, I think, twice. But we went in and out a couple of times.

Last time we went in, I went over right in front of the safe haven door and yelled for Chris twice, and somebody from outside actually responded. And I knew it was behind me because I could tell because I'm looking right at the gate. And that's when I—you know, to me, either he's dead or he's not in there.⁴⁸

He described how he and his team repelled a secondary attack on the Special Mission Compound:

There was really no communication on the radio. People were just, you know, doing their thing, doing their, you know, returning fire pretty much, you know, trying to establish a base of fire. When I came out, there was a ladder. I went up on the roof. And, you know, it took me a second. I wanted to clear the roof make sure there's nobody up there besides me.

I got on the radio. I told [Security Team Leader], "Hey, I'm up on the roof," just in case I got shot. I moved up, and just as the guy was coming back to shoot his RPG again, I popped up over the wall, shot about 10, 15 rounds. He fell back, and that was it. Everything stopped.⁴⁹

TEAM MEMBER 3'S ACCOUNT

Annex Security Team Member 3 described the mortar attacks:

It was about 5:30 in the morning—the sun was just coming up—because me and Tyrone [Woods] had been talking about, you know, if they're going to attack us, it's going to happen here shortly because usually the time to attack is right before the sun comes up. About that time, [Tripoli Security Team member Glen Doherty] came up on the roof after the guys from Tripoli had came in. I never met [Glen Doherty]. He walks over to Tyrone and says hi to Tyrone. They had worked together on the teams. Tyrone introduced him to me, said that he was a sniper.

I told him: Well, that's good. I hope we don't need you, but it will be great having another rifle up here.

He had turned to walk away, and it was about that time that there was an explosion against the back wall, and there was a mortar that hit the top of the back wall, which from our building was maybe 8 or 10 yards from the building.

[DS Agent 2] was in the corner where the ladder was at. Me and Tyrone were in the opposite corner facing out towards what we call Zombieland, and when that hit, small arms fire started coming from that direction, and Tyrone opened up with a machine gun. I started shooting with my assault rifle. I heard [DS Agent 2] yell out that he was hit.

I kind of glanced over. I saw his shadow sitting because the wall at the top of our building was about 3 feet tall, so there was a box that you had to step on to get up on to the ladder. So he was—I saw his image or the silhouette of him sitting on that box, and he was holding his head. What went through my mind is that he's breathing, so his heart is beating, and he is going to have to take care of himself because we're getting attacked.

We're shooting. I kneel down to change magazines. As I come back up after changing magazines, the first mortar hits the top of the roof, hits almost directly into the wall, where the roof and the arc of the parapet or wall comes up, right into the corner of that. When that hit, it blew me back a little bit, knocked me back. I kind of caught myself. I saw Tyrone go down. He was in a fetal position at my left. The mortar hit on my right.

As I come up, I bring my arm up to grab my gun, and from about here down, it was kind of hanging off at a 90 degree angle. I continued to try to grab my gun. Another mortar hit, and I kind of glanced over my right shoulder, and I saw [Glen Doherty] go straight down face first on to the roof. As I tried to keep firing, my weapon is pretty much inoperable. I can't grab it with my hand. The third mortar hits and peppers me again with shrapnel. The best way I can describe it is it felt like I got stung by a thousand bees. At that point, I figured I might better get to cover because if another one comes, I'll be lucky if I survive that.

I kind of dove down to the wall, the foot of where Tyrone was, and everything had went quiet. I kind of sat up and thought I was bleeding out because everything was wet around me. I realized that it was water because it was cold, and there was a water tank right there beside us that had gotten perforated. I don't know what the timeframe was.

I pulled out a tourniquet, and I was trying to get the tourniquet on. Then I reached over and grabbed Tyrone's foot. I was trying to see if I could pull myself over to him to check to see if he had any pulse. At that point, I saw [Annex Security Team Member 2] come up over top of the roof, which I didn't know it then—I saw a shadow come up, and at that point, he had at first put two tourniquets on [DS Agent 2]; one on his leg, one on his arm. Then he

come over to me, and he was sitting there. He told me to quit messing with my arm because I was trying to put it back in place. He grabbed my tourniquet, put it on, stood me up, and asked if I could walk myself over to the ladder so he could tend to Tyrone and [Glen Doherty], and I said, yeah.⁵⁰

ANNEX EMPLOYEE'S ACCOUNT

One of the CIA employees at the Annex that night had the following exchange with the Select Committee:

Q: It sounds like it was a really chaotic night also. Is that accurate?

A: Oh, yeah. Yeah. It was—but you know what, what amazed me the most was how calm everybody was. And I was—it really impressed me. To me, I thought everybody did an outstanding job, you know. I was, you know, with the [Annex Security Team] guys. I mean, I owe my life to them, you know, and everybody else.⁵¹

3. RESPONSE OF TRIPOLI SECURITY TEAM

After being notified of the attacks in Benghazi, a security team in Tripoli composed of four CIA security officers, two Department of Defense servicemembers, and a linguist swiftly responded by chartering a private plane to transport the team to Benghazi in order to bolster security, try to locate and rescue Ambassador Stevens, and evacuate American personnel.

The Select Committee interviewed two individuals who were part of that Tripoli security team, one who had been previously interviewed by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. They both confirmed the 2014 finding of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

The decision to send CIA officers from Tripoli to Benghazi to rescue the Ambassador and bolster security of U.S. personnel in Benghazi was a tactical decision appropriately made by the senior officers on the ground.⁵²

The Chief of Station in Tripoli described his role in deploying the security team from Tripoli to Benghazi:

At that time, the [security] team lead Tripoli asked for my approval to QRF, to provide quick reaction force, and my answer, response was: Absolutely, get your team together. [Defense Department Servicemember] then came up to me and said: We want to go. I asked them did they have authorities. They said: Yes, they do, it's an ambassador in extremis. I said: Absolutely go.⁵³

As one member of the Tripoli security team explained to the House Intelligence Committee in 2013: “[T]he [C]hief looked at me and said [Tripoli Team Member], what do you

need? I said we need a ride. [Redacted]. I mean within minutes.”⁵⁴ This member of the Tripoli security team elaborated:

A: Long story short, we—within 45 minutes we were moving to the airfield.

Q: Within 45 minutes of what? When you first learned of the attack?

A: Yes. From when I first received the phone call.⁵⁵

He complimented the Defense Department members of the Tripoli team:

I like to think that my tactical math is pretty good. Those guys are—because I’ve been doing [security team work] for 10 years, and I’ve worked pretty much every AO [area of operations], and I’ve been involved in some bad incidents, but those guys are outstanding.⁵⁶

Similarly, in an after-action report, the Defense Department member of the Tripoli security team who was interviewed by the Select Committee praised the actions of the CIA security team members:

Under fire they performed courageously. Their determination and focus was on par with that of [Redacted] and I. I couldn’t be happier they were there and prouder of the way they fought and conducted themselves.⁵⁷

The Deputy Chief of Base in Benghazi also credited the Tripoli security team with assisting the evacuation:

The actions of the [Tripoli Security Team] were also exemplary, and enabled us to successfully and in a controlled manner evacuate from our compound ensuring we had completed a thorough destruction procedure of our classified holdings and sensitive equipment.⁵⁸

DOD SERVICEMEMBER’S ACCOUNT

The Select Committee interviewed a Department of Defense (DOD) servicemember who was part of the Tripoli security team, who explained his team’s response on the night of the attacks:

Q: At some point on 9/11 did you learn of an attack at the—what you are calling the consulate there in Benghazi, the special mission compound, did you learn of that attack at some point?

A: The one in Benghazi, sir? Yes, sir.

Q: Okay. And how did you learn of that?

A: It was through my team leader there in Tripoli. He had texted me on my cell phone, said come down to the TOC [Tactical Operations Center], and then told me that the consulate had been attacked, or was being

attacked, and then didn't know the, you know, exact specifications of the attack, but knew it was ongoing. ...

Q: Okay. And what did he tell you when you arrived back at the TOC?

A: That the consulate was being attacked, the situation was, you know, was not known at the time of the attack or who was attacking or what was going on, but they were preparing to possibly go out to Benghazi.

...

Q: [Redacted]

A: I was fairly certain we were going if we were packing bags when I went back, sir, and when I came back, it was confirmed when he asked me to start looking for guys that would go that were qualified to go. And then we got a confirmation from the Chief of Station that he would like us to take that team up to Benghazi.⁵⁹

He explained that his team landed at the Benina airport near Benghazi at around 2 a.m. local time, contacted the Annex, and learned there was a lull in fire at the Annex:

Q: And what did [Benghazi Annex Security Team Leader] relay at this point? This is at some time at 02 [2:00 am] or shortly thereafter.

A: A lull in fire.

Q: A lull in fire.

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did he indicate how many harassing attacks they had sustained over the period of time?

A: Not specifically that I can remember, sir.

Q: Okay.

A: Just the last time of it.

Q: And there was a lull at some point starting at 02 or after 02. At least there was a lull when you talked to him?

A: Yes, sir. When I had talked to him, there had been a lull, and no one had been attacking the annex in quite some time. ...

Q: Okay. Did you have any sense during the 2 and-a-half hours that you spent at Benina airport that you were being prevented from departing the airport? Could you have left at any time from 02 to 0430?

A: We didn't have a mode of transportation that was ours, so we were depending on those local militias. So it took us that long to find one that was capable of taking us out into town. Again, initially we were trying to go to the hospital, which we were all being told, "No, we can't take you to the hospital. We can take you to the annex." So that fight went on for a little while, with us thinking that he could possibly be at the hospital needing medical care. So we were pushing hard enough to go there that it prolonged our time at the airport. Then once we found out he was deceased, we had obviously gave that up, and they had no problem taking us to the annex.⁶⁰

The DOD servicemember described what happened after his team arrived at the Annex shortly before 5 a.m. local time:

Once we had gotten to the annex, we called probably 3 minutes out, and the [Annex Security] Team Lead [Redacted] was actually out there to meet us with the gate open. We didn't take any of the vehicles inside. We exited the vehicles and walked inside.

We took the Libyan Shield [militia] commander inside with us so his guys would stay there, ultimately. Went directly to the main house where the TOC was. I think it was Building Three. Team leader started talking to chief of base, and I was talking to [Benghazi Annex Security Team Leader] on the security situation, wounded personnel, what did he need from us that he didn't have already, and how we could help the security posture.

Shortly after us being there, we were all sitting outside while we were talking about this on the front patio of Building Three. We had some sporadic gunfire over the top of Building Three, and immediately following, the first mortar round hit. I believe it went long, hit out in the road where our convoy had been. The gate is obviously closed to the compound now. Next one hit short just behind Building Three on the wall towards the warehouse. The other three or four mortars hit directly on top of Building Three.⁶¹

The DOD servicemember described the decision to evacuate the Annex:

Q: At that point, what was the direction from the Chief of Base? Was that when the decision was made to evacuate the annex entirely?

A: We did. Once we got back, we decided that the situation we had was untenable to stay at the compound. We didn't have enough shooters and there were too many wounded, and we were definitely going to lose our State Department wounded if we had stayed there much longer. So we were pushing to get out as fast as we could.

Q: And who made the decision to evacuate the annex entirely? Whose decision was that?

A: That was us as a whole. We had all gotten together in a group and talked about the situation, and we all agreed, the chief of base, both team lead for Tripoli and Benghazi, and myself and my team leader.⁶²

TRIPOLI SECURITY TEAM MEMBER'S ACCOUNT

The Select Committee also interviewed another individual who was part of the CIA security team that traveled from Tripoli to Benghazi that night. That CIA security team member described how he learned about the attack:

Well, the team leader advised us that the Ambassador's convoy was hit. The information was very convoluted at the time. It was unclear. The word we got, he was injured, accounted for, injured and missing, and then just missing. And we may have had to go to Benghazi to assist. So we prepared to—we put a team together, and I was assigned as the communications officer, the commo element.⁶³

He further explained to the Select Committee the mission of the Tripoli security team:

Q: And so the initial mission, is it fair to say your understanding was to locate the Ambassador?

A: Correct.

Q: And was the mission also to provide assistance to the other Americans in Benghazi?

A: At the Annex, correct.

Q: Okay. Were there any other elements to that mission, other than those two?

A: It was to locate and recover the Ambassador, and to assist the Annex with their security needs that night.

Q: And to your knowledge, who initiated the discussion of sending personnel from Tripoli to respond to the attack in Benghazi?

A: It was from my team leader through our Chief of Station.

Q: And the ultimate decision to send the team, was that the Chief of Station decision, to your knowledge?

A: To my knowledge, yes.⁶⁴

He had previously explained to the House Intelligence Committee in 2013 that he considered the security team's response to be "efficient," stating:

[I]f you look at our response time in Tripoli, getting to the plane was actually very efficient. If you look the way Libyans operate, nothing moves fast. I don't care if the President comes there, nothing is going to move fast. It is just the way it is. So us, time we got the call to launch, time we went wheels up, I think it was very efficient. ... But the way Tripoli and Libyans operate and the way, how congested Tripoli was, we launched pretty rapidly.⁶⁵

The Tripoli security team member explained to the Select Committee that after landing in Benghazi, the security team learned that the Ambassador had died. After receiving confirmation of the death, the security team traveled to the Benghazi Annex:

Q: And at what point did you learn the Ambassador was likely killed in action versus still alive somewhere?

A: I believe just before our transportation arrived, our TL [Team Lead] advised us that someone made it to the hospital, and that he was confirmed KIA.⁶⁶

He described what he observed when he arrived at the Annex:

Q: So you arrived at the base, the Annex. What did you observe when you first arrived there?

A: That there were no guards at the front gate. It was dark. We were still on night vision. I noticed the [Annex Security] personnel on top of the wall near the gate, and we were met at the gate by the Benghazi team leader, [Redacted], who was on a cell phone with [Redacted]. And we walked into the compound. It was quiet, and it was dark at this point in time. And at that time, that's when I walked into the main building. Basically we were going to get briefed and come up with a plan on who needed to go and what our next steps were. And shortly after that is when we came under the initial, one of the attacks.⁶⁷

He explained that he was inside the building when the mortar attacks happened, and he left the building to make his way to the roof to assist. He described:

Well, they actually put bathroom tile outside there, and so it was real slick. He [the wounded Annex security team member] ended up falling on top of me, and I ended up hyperextending my leg to the rear. So now I'm injured, so I drug him out because we started getting hit by small arms fire. So I dragged him around the corner. I started putting a tourniquet on his arm. He was bleeding from his left arm. He had a hole in his neck, and he had a hole in his chest.

So I put tourniquets on his arm and started patching up with the help of others from the shrapnel wounds. And it seemed like seconds later when I heard somebody say, [Redacted], I have another one for you. That's when the second State Department guy, [Agent 2], I believe his name is, he came down.

And I pushed [Annex Security Team Member 3] up on to the couch, and that's when [Agent 2] was there. And [Agent 2's] right foot was hanging off. He had a hole in his left arm. He had several shrapnel holes in his head.

So I readjusted the tourniquet on his right leg, put another one on his right leg, and ended up putting a tourniquet on his left arm and packing his neck with combat gauze to help stop the bleeding. I ended up starting an IV on him. And then I went back to [Annex Security Team Member 3], put an IV in him. That's one of the State Department personnel—I don't know who it was—had morphine, and I made the call to give [Agent 2] morphine because he was in so much pain he started pawing at the tourniquets and the gauze, some of the dressings I put on. And that seemed like seconds.

During this process is when the [Redacted] asked me to—the cell phones got jammed, not jammed, but they were busy tones. He asked me to get on SAT radio and contact Tripoli and give them a SITREP [situation report].⁶⁸

4. LIFESAVING MEDICAL CARE

On the night of the attacks, U.S. personnel in Benghazi and Tripoli provided lifesaving medical care to the wounded immediately following the attacks, during the evacuation from Benghazi, and upon arrival in Tripoli.

The Tripoli security team member who had provided medical care on the ground in Benghazi also provided lifesaving first-aid during the evacuation flight from Benghazi to Tripoli to a DS agent who was gravely wounded in the mortar attack. The Tripoli security team member explained that he was not a medical professional, and credited his actions on a mandatory, specialized, in-depth combat trauma course he had taken as part of his duties.

He described how two individuals—a Special Forces-trained medic and a State Department nurse—took over medical care when they landed in Tripoli:

Q: I'm going to step back real quick to the medical assistance you provided and just ask couple questions about that, the medical assistance to [Annex Security Team Member 3] and to [Agent 2]. Were you able to stabilize, in your view, those two individuals or any of those individuals prior to the evacuation of the Annex?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you have to restabilize them on the plane, either of them?

A: I gave [Agent 2] another morphine on the plane. I adjusted [Annex Security Team Member 3's] bandage. And then when I was moving [Agent 2] off the plane—we were bringing him off without the stretcher because the stretcher was so big and the plane was so small—he stopped