

Death in Benghazi – Part 4: Is The House Intelligence Committee Benghazi Report a “Whitewash”?

by Jerry Gordon (December 2014)



The Benghazi terrorist attack on September 11-12, 2012 in which four Americans lost their lives under mysterious circumstances has gone through more twists and turns of opaque testimony and disclosures than even those in the Watergate Hearings in 1973. The Watergate Hearings were extensively televised with stunning revelations of wrong doing and breach of trust at the highest levels of our government that caused the unseemly resignation of President Nixon and later pardon by his successor, President Gerald Ford. In the Benghazi case, the testimony and conclusions reached in the [Final Report on Benghazi by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence \(HPSCI\)](#) had the opposite result. In the opinion of private investigations and CIA security contractors, it whitewashes the covert activities and security lapses of the Intelligence Community thus, effectively exonerating the Administration. It also dismissed allegations that the Committee failed to address “[key facts and unanswered questions](#).” The conclusions of the House Intelligence Committee Report await the definitive investigations, public hearings and ultimate reports of the [House Select Committee on Benghazi](#) authorized in May 2014. The creation of the House Select Committee on Benghazi was stimulated in part by the investigations and interim report of the [Citizens’ Commission on Benghazi](#) and lobbying by [Special Operations](#) veterans groups. That was bolstered by the [revelations](#) from interviews in a *Fox News Special Report* with the three surviving members of the Security Team at the CIA Annex – Kris (“Tanto”) Paronto, Mark (“Oz”) Geist, and John (“Tig”) Tiegen. They were drawn from the book, [13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened In Benghazi by Mitchell Zuckoff with the Annex Security Team](#). Paronto alleges that if they had not been ordered by the CIA Chief of Base in Benghazi to stand down at least three times in the opening stages of the attack that: “I strongly believe if we’d left immediately, they’d still be alive today.” The HPSCI Report finding was that no such stand down order was given by the Benghazi CIA Chief of Base before the Annex security team left on their own to undertake a possible rescue. That is just one piece of contradictory testimony in

this disputed House Intelligence Committee Report.



Kris ("Tanto") Paronto

[Listen](#) to a discussion on the Benghazi report with CIA security contractor and former Army Ranger Kris Paronto, Lisa Benson and Jerry Gordon from the Sunday, November 30, 2014 Radio Show.

Since the Iran-Contra Congressional investigations and federal prosecutions of the mid-1980's the Intelligence Community does not engage in covert operations without specific legal authorization such as a Presidential Finding. These findings typically require briefings of the chairs and ranking members of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees and Congressional Leadership. That is termed "lawyering up" as reflected in the conditioned or parsed language of official public reports. The reality is that covert activities are often conducted through liaison with foreign intelligence agencies termed "cut outs." They facilitate, as in the Benghazi case, arms shipments to opposition groups in the civil war in Syria from the arsenals of the late Libyan strongman, Muammar Gaddafi. Hence, denial in the HPSCI Final Report on Benghazi of such activities. This despite the presence of contradictory information contained in underlying redacted transcripts of testimony by key witnesses, such as former Deputy Director of the CIA, Mike Morrell. That obscured the realities of what may have triggered the planned attacks by local Al Qaeda affiliated militia groups in Benghazi and other unidentified covert special intelligence units of state sponsors of terrorism. There are the unexplored questions in the Committee's final report of the possible involvement of Iran's Quds Force, the thesis propounded by veteran Iran watcher and investigative journalist, Ken Timmerman in his book, [*Dark Forces: The Truth Behind What Happened in Benghazi.*](#)

The investigations of the Benghazi episode by five committees of the US House of Representatives have left an opaque record. The final report of the HPSCI chaired by Rep. Michael Rogers (R-MI) released on November 21, 2014 was quickly praised by the media for exonerating both the Administration and the CIA from any wrong doing. However, on closer scrutiny, the 37-page report and hundreds of pages of testimony, although heavily redacted, left a distinct impression on some knowledgeable investigators that the intent was to obfuscate rather than bring truth to power. It violated the basic standard articulated by revered US Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis that "sunlight is the best disinfectant."

The public and most especially the families of those four Americans, who died in the terrorist attacks that night into morning over two years ago, deserve the truth about what occurred in Benghazi. The last remaining hope of that possibility is the House Select Committee on

Benghazi, chaired by Trey Gowdy, (R-SC), a former federal prosecutor. The rush to publish the HPSCI final report by outgoing chairman Rogers was likely motivated by leaving behind a record that might pre-empt whatever findings the House Select Committee on Benghazi may disclose. Rogers is scheduled to leave the House at the end of the 113th Session of Congress at year's end.

In three previous NER articles in the "Death in Benghazi" series we have endeavored to present information that raised questions requiring more answers. This fourth part reveals that with the publication of the HPSCI final report, there is more evidence of obfuscation leading to the murky conclusion that facts have been suborned either because of political expediency or possible conflicts of interest.

The unraveling of HPSCI findings

Saturday, November 22, 2014, we held a conference call with Ken Timmerman and Dick Brauer, a member of the [Citizens' Committee on Benghazi](#) and one of the founders of [Special Operations Speaks \(SOS\)](#). Brauer is a retired USAF Col. and former commandant of the Special Operations School at Hurlburt Field in Northwest Florida. Timmerman thought the report was "lame" and needed a definitive review. Brauer said that he believes more substance may be revealed during an upcoming early December 2014 [House Select Committee on Benghazi](#), chaired by former federal prosecutor, Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC). The question remains as to the timing of the HPSCI Benghazi Report released Friday, November 21, 2014.

[Listen](#) to a discussion on the Benghazi report with Col. Brauer of Special Operations Speaks, Lisa Benson and Jerry Gordon from the Sunday, November 23, 2014 Radio Show.

Ex-CIA agent, Larry Johnson, amplified these observations in a post on his *blog*, *No Quarter*, [The Bengazi Whitewash from the House Intelligence Committee](#). Johnson rebutted the HPSCI findings:

There are six key findings.

The Committee first concludes that the CIA ensured sufficient security for CIA facilities in Benghazi and, without a requirement to do so, ably and bravely assist the State Department on the night of the attacks.

Yes, but the response was delayed because [As Seymour Hersh reported in the London Review of Books](#), eight members of the House and Senate had been briefed on the Libya operation.

Technically, it was an "authorized" operation. In reality, most members of Congress knew nothing of the operation.

...and [the CIA]was not collecting and shipping arms to Syria.

That was being done by Brits, Turks and Arabs from the Gulf. I also know personally of one American who was hired by a British firm who convinced the man that he was a non-official cover officer of the CIA. This man was in Benghazi, did collect MANPADS and turned them over to a British citizen who was part of the company he worked for. The critical question is to define the precise nature of the CIA's role in supporting and monitoring the clandestine effort to arm the rebels in Syria.

Third, The Committee finds that a mixed group of individuals, including those affiliated with Al Qa'ida, participated in the attacks on U.S. facilities in Benghazi, although the Committee finds that the intelligence was and remains conflicting about the identities, affiliations, and motivations of the attackers.

Fourth, the Committee concludes that after the attacks, the early intelligence assessments and the Administration's initial public narrative on the causes and motivations for the attacks were not fully accurate.

As the HPSCI folks would say, that's "not fully accurate."

Fifth, the Committee finds that the process used to generate the talking points HPSCI asked for-and which were used for Ambassador Rice's public appearances-was flawed. HPSCI asked for the talking points solely to aid Members' ability to communicate publicly using the best available intelligence at the time, and mistakes were made in the process of how those talking points were developed.

This finding alone underscores the corruption of the HPSCI report. What is indisputable from the email record of the process used to produce the now infamous talking points was that politics was inserted into the intel process. ...We do not have to rely on second hand evidence that Obama and his team did this. We have the documentary evidence which, even the House Intel Committee concedes, shows a manipulation of the intelligence for political purposes.

Sixth, the Committee found no evidence that any officer was intimidated, wrongly forced to sign a nondisclosure agreement or otherwise kept from speaking to Congress, or polygraphed because of their presence in Benghazi. The Committee also found no evidence

that the CIA conducted unauthorized activities in Benghazi and no evidence that the IC shipped arms to Syria.

Why?

To cover up the lie that the Obama Administration knew nothing about arms shipments to Syrian rebels, was doing anything to support the activities of Saudi Arabia and Turkey to move weapons to Syria and that Al Qaeda had nothing to do with the attack. It was during and immediately after the attack that the Obama White House and the Clinton State Department engaged in a deliberate effort to cover up the truth.

Dark Forces at work behind the HPSCI report

Timmerman believes the media abetted this deception by suggesting that the HPSCI Report exonerated the Administration and the CIA dismissing so-called conspiracy theories. He noted that given the short news cycle following the release of the report, Friday, November 21, 2014, the press barely had time to digest the 37 page report let alone delve into the underlying transcripts. Report findings denying that there was no stand down orders have been contradicted by surviving CIA security contractors in the book *13 Hours*. Those contractors engaged in the battle at the Annex said that the Chief of Base in Benghazi had issued such stand down orders several times, resulting in a critical 21 minute delay – too late, to rescue Amb. Stevens and aide Sean Smith. When asked his opinion, Timmerman said that with arms and equipment already in a vehicle, the CIA contractors if released in a timely manner might have saved the lives of both Ambassador Stevens and Smith.

Timmerman said that the Report leaves many unanswered questions that might be addressed by the House Select Committee on Benghazi, led by Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC). He doesn't believe that possible GOP Senate creation of a parallel Select Benghazi Committee in the 114th Session beginning January 2015 would be productive. He noted there have already been five House Committee investigations, including this final report issued by the HPSCI.

On the matter of arms shipments from Libya to Syrian opposition, Timmerman drew a fine line between so-called Presidential Findings authorizing covert operations and liaison with foreign intelligence agencies, the latter not subject to Congressional oversight. He said the CIA briefings on covert operations in Benghazi under Presidential Findings were typically given to the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees and the Senate Majority and Minority leaders as well as the House Speaker and Minority Leader, the so-called "eight Cardinals." According to his sources, none of the briefed Congressional members made

any objections. Timmerman, following the revelations by ex-CIA agent Johnson, indicated the filtration of arms was accomplished through a cut out involving British, Turkish, and Qatari Intelligence and Australian contractors. According to Timmerman, a 400 ton shipment of arms on the vessel *Al Entisar* was sent by a Libyan Jihadist group to a Turkish Muslim Brotherhood charity, IHH. That attracted Western press whose reports embarrassed CIA Director Gen. David Petraeus and led to former Secretary of State Clinton dispatching the late Ambassador Stevens to Benghazi to shut the operation down. The Turkish Embassy General Consul, who Stevens met with in Benghazi on the evening of 9/11/2012, was likely an intelligence official. Timmerman commented that Stevens had conducted liaison with Islamist Libyan militias during the Arab Spring rebellion against Gaddafi. He said that was reflective of the Administration's distinction that there were good versus bad Jihadists.

When asked about what was going on at the CIA Annex in Benghazi, Timmerman pointed out there were two groups of intelligence personnel there, not including the CIA security contractors at the annex. One group of CIA operatives was monitoring the activities of local Islamist militia and the arms filtration cut out operation with foreign intelligence agencies. Not even mentioned in the HSPCI report, Timmerman contends, was the presence of NSA agents intercepting communications of local Islamist militias and Iranian Quds Force operatives in Benghazi. Timmerman agrees with the comments of Col. Brauer that the Iranian Quds Force operatives had surveyed the annex in Benghazi preparing it for a possible mortar attack. Timmerman noted the HSPCI Report comment that use of mortars by the Taliban in Afghanistan was woefully inaccurate reflecting little training in the use of such weapons. Col. Brauer said in an interview with this writer that Soviet 82 mm mortars weigh over 120 pounds and require a team of four. Moreover, each round weighs over 7 pounds. Brauer pointed to the expertise in the use of mortars by the Iranian Quds force and military during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980's. Timmerman believes that members of the Quds Force in Benghazi were possibly involved in preparation and execution of the mortar attack on the CIA Annex.

Col. Brauer's sources suggested that some Republican members of the HPSCI may not have consulted on the release of final report. That prompted observations by Timmerman that in too many instances, ruling majority parties are often side tracked by the interests of the chairman and ranking members. That may have played a part in the timing of the release of the House Intelligence Committee report. Timmerman noted former CIA Director Michael Morell's role in editing the talking points exonerating the Administration and subsequently joining a Washington, DC-based strategic consulting firm, [Beacon Global Strategies](#). The firm has close connections to former aides of Secretary Hillary Clinton and former Pentagon Chief, Leon Panetta. Also joining the firm as Managing Director was Michael Allen, former Majority Chief

of Staff to outgoing House Intelligence Committee Chair, Mike Rogers. It appears that the revolving door in Washington Intelligence circles creates conflicts overarching important national security interests.

Listen to the 1330 am WEBY interview with Ken Timmerman:

[Segment 1](#), [Segment 2](#), [Segment 3](#), [Segment 4](#).

Also see Jerry Gordon's collection of interviews,