



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Chairman Royce Opening Statement for Today's 2 p.m. House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing

Secretary Clinton to Testify on Benghazi Attack this Afternoon

Washington, D.C. – Today at 2 p.m., Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, will convene a Committee hearing entitled, ["Terrorist Attack in Benghazi: The Secretary of State's View,"](#) at which Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will answer questions about the September 11, 2012 terrorist attack on U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya. In the attack, terrorists killed Ambassador Chris Stevens, Sean Smith, Tyrone Woods, and Glen Doherty.

At the hearing, Chairman Royce will deliver the following opening statement:

Statement of Chairman Ed Royce
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
"Terrorist Attack in Benghazi: The Secretary of State's View"
January 23, 2013
(As Prepared for Delivery)

Madame Secretary, on behalf of the entire Committee, let me say how glad we are to see you healthy, and how much we appreciate your desire to testify about Benghazi before you leave office. Our appreciation extends to the work you have performed on behalf of our country.

Examining the first murder of a U.S. ambassador in nearly 35 years --and the killing of three other brave Americans-- isn't the most welcome place to start the year. But it is necessary. The State Department must learn from its mistakes to better protect its employees, many of whom serve in hostile environments. Unfortunately, threats to Americans abroad are growing, particularly in North Africa, as last week's attack in Algeria again showed. I support having a wide diplomatic presence – we can't retreat. But it has to be done with the safety of our personnel foremost in mind.

This Committee intends to work with your Department in a bipartisan way, to improve security. Every organization has its shortcomings; few welcome them being highlighted. But it's this Committee's job to get answers to the tough questions.

Our goal is to identify where State Department management broke down – thus failing to protect our people in Benghazi. It is clear that the problem was not confined to a few individuals. The Accountability Review Board, convened by Secretary Clinton, found, "Systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two bureaus of the State Department."

According to the Board, these systemic failures led to the "grossly inadequate" security in Libya. The Benghazi compound was facing a storm of militancy, a flood of weapons, and a deteriorating security environment. Attacks were escalating. Yet the compound was inexplicably forced to rely on unarmed Libyan guards, and a militia that included extremist elements. No wonder the Board found a "pervasive realization" among those in Benghazi that security "was not a high priority for Washington." Our diplomats deserve better.

The Board found that responsibility stopped at the assistant secretary level, below the Department's most senior management. This seems to contrast with the recommendation of the 1999 Accountability Review Board on the East Africa bombings, which said that "the Secretary of State should take a personal and active role" in security issues. This Committee is concerned that the Department's most senior officials either should have known about the worsening security in Benghazi – or did know. Either way, security requests were denied.

So I'm not sure the Board saw the full picture. And if not, its report isn't much of a blueprint for fixing things. Yet the State Department must get this right. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates will be targeting our diplomats for years to come. Madame Secretary, the Committee stands ready to help in any way it can.

Today's discussion may turn to funding. But when reading the conclusions of the Board, one must ask how more money would have made a difference in a bureaucracy plagued by what it called systemic failures? After all, as the security situation in Libya worsened, the State Department turned away free security assets. State Department officials have testified that funding wasn't an issue. More resources may be needed in some areas, but the tragedy of Benghazi was rooted in bad decisions.

Finally, the Benghazi perpetrators must be apprehended or killed. It's troubling that Tunisia recently released a key suspect. Poor Libyan cooperation has hampered the FBI's investigation. Success here is a matter of justice --and signaling to militants that there is no place to hide.

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