

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Hearing on “Benghazi: Where is the State Department Accountability?”
September 18, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This hearing of the Committee will come to order.

Since September 11, 2012, the Committee has been focused on the tragedy in Benghazi, Libya, where terrorists killed four Americans that day, including our Ambassador, the first killed in the line of duty since 1979. The focus of today’s hearing, our fourth, is the troubling lack of accountability we have seen within the State Department since. The bottom line is that over one year later, no State Department personnel have been held accountable for the Department’s failure to protect the Benghazi consulate, and U.S. personnel. None.

As we know, there were so many things wrong with the State Department’s decision-making before this fatal attack. In the face of a glaring need, with violence in Benghazi mounting, critical security requests from the field were denied. The Department was asleep on 9/11. This led the Accountability Review Board to find “systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two [State Department] bureaus.” But no State Department personnel have been fired, or even disciplined. No one has missed a paycheck.

Accountability can be painful. Those making bad decisions may have long and otherwise good records. But the Department can't have a culture of accountability, which is what any well-functioning organization needs, and which is essential to protecting its personnel, if no one is held accountable for the mismanagement and poor leadership the ARB identified.

Let’s look at how the Department’s review process has played out:

*The ARB failed to interview the Secretary of State and improbably capped responsibility at the assistant Secretary level;

*Four officials are placed on paid administrative leave in a process that appears to have violated Department personnel policies;

*The former Secretary ceded her authority to take action against the four individuals or others to a new Secretary for his review;

*And finally, four officials on paid leave were reinstated and reassigned into unspecified positions at this review’s conclusion, while at least one individual connected with failed management practices has received a promotion.

I wish I did, but I just don't see the level of accountability that Benghazi warrants. Indeed, that Benghazi demands.

Meanwhile, not one terrorist perpetrator has been captured or killed – despite the President saying that this was his highest priority.

The terrorist threat in much of the world, unfortunately, is only increasing. U.S. facilities are tempting terrorist targets. The State Department, with this Committee's encouragement, has undertaken some important embassy security reforms. We have put many of those reforms into legislation, passed out of this Committee, which also authorized the Administration's full funding request for embassy security.

But no amount of money will overcome poor management, and poor management is a given without accountability. I would ask all Committee Members: are you comfortable with this process that has no State Department official being held accountable in any meaningful way?

Other Committees have been working on other aspects of Benghazi. Many questions have been answered. This Committee will continue to focus on accountability, including legislation to reform the Accountability Review Board process so that it is truly independent and future secretaries of state, of either party, can't stack the deck. I would hope to have bipartisan support for that.

As we hold this hearing, we should focus on the facts, ask the difficult questions, but work in a way that is going to lead to the most productive outcome: that is, learning from mistakes and improving the security of U.S. diplomatic personnel serving overseas, many in increasingly threatening surroundings. That is a Committee goal I know we can all agree upon.

I will now turn to Ranking Member Engel for his opening statement.