



Benghazigate: The Disaster That Should Have Sunk Obama — and Still Could

President Barack Obama has survived Benghazigate — thus far. In the weeks and days leading up to the November 6 elections, President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and their advisors, no doubt, had containment of this Libyan fiasco foremost in their minds. Would toxic details of the deadly debacle leak out and spell doom for the struggling administration in the closing hours of the campaign?



A CBS News national telephone poll of likely voters conducted October 25-28 did not portend well for Team Obama. Locked in a dead heat with Mitt Romney, and with the economy in shambles and sliding toward a fiscal cliff, unemployment sky high, and a looming debt tsunami, the last thing the Obama White House could afford was a late-inning foreign policy disaster, especially when Obama propagandists were touting foreign policy and national security as their candidate's great strength.

According to the CBS poll, only 38 percent of voters approved of President Obama's handling of the September 11 attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, that left four Americans dead: U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, his assistant Sean Smith, and former Navy Seals Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty. Over half of all voters (51 percent) and 57 percent of Independents disapproved of his handling of Benghazi.

Even though the conventional wisdom held that pocketbook issues would determine the outcome of the race, Benghazi could have spelled the end for Obama. The numbers were looking very bad, and that was even with the overwhelmingly pro-Obama mainstream media bending over backward to cover for the White House and keep Libya off the media radar screens. As more and more troubling details about Benghazi began leaking out, the major corporate media smothered the facts and stuck to the White House talking points.

The full details about precisely what transpired at the American "consulate" in Benghazi on the night of September 11, 2012, still remain largely suppressed by the Obama administration and its accomplices in the major media. However, the damning evidence that has surfaced paints an ugly picture of a commander in chief who ignored months of repeated warnings about escalating violence and terrorist activity in Benghazi, ignored and/or denied requests for additional security, and after the attack on our "consulate" began, refused to send adequate backup and assistance to the American defenders who were vastly outnumbered and under fire.

Most of President Obama's harshest Benghazi critics have focused on these twin security failures: failure to heed the prior warnings of those on the ground in Libya, and failure to aid our forces after they had come under attack. In addition, critics have blasted the administration for its coverup of these failures, most especially its insistence for weeks that the attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi was not a coordinated terrorist attack but a spontaneous demonstration over an anti-Muslim video, *Innocence of Muslims*, that escalated out of control. (For a more extensive review of the White House disinformation



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campaign claiming the Benghazi attack resulted from a reaction to the video, see Alex Newman's articles [here](#) and [here](#)) However, what is far more damning for President Obama, and potentially far more damaging politically, is the charge that the so-called U.S. consulate in Benghazi was actually a staging center utilized by the administration for meetings between Ambassador Stevens and militant jihadist leaders and as a distribution center for supplying weapons to these anti-American jihadists, including al-Qaeda affiliates.

Charges Flying

Investigative reporter/best-selling author/radio talk-show host Aaron Klein began reporting in September that according to his Middle East sources, Ambassador Stevens and other U.S. personnel were involved in the Obama administration's effort to destabilize and overthrow the government of Syria. Klein, the Jerusalem bureau chief for WorldNetDaily (WND), wrote in a September 24 WND column:

Christopher Stevens, the U.S. ambassador murdered in Libya, played a central role in recruiting jihadists to fight Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, according to Egyptian security officials speaking to WND.

Stevens served as a key contact with the Saudis to coordinate the recruitment by Saudi Arabia of Islamic fighters from North Africa and Libya. The jihadists were sent to Syria via Turkey to attack Assad's forces, said the security officials.

This reporter interviewed Aaron Klein in Appleton, Wisconsin, on October 23, where he appeared at a joint speaking engagement with New Zealand author/researcher Trevor Loudon, author of [Barack Obama and the Enemies Within](#).

Klein emphatically took issue with the numerous media reports that referred to the U.S. compound that was attacked on September 11 as a "U.S. consulate," and explained why that distinction is important.

"It was not a consulate," [Aaron Klein told The New American](#). "According to Middle East security officials I talked to, this was a major meeting point — I would say the *central* meeting point — for the American diplomats, including Christopher Stevens, the U.S. ambassador who was killed, to meet with officials of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, about supplying the opposition in Syria and Libya. Well, who is the opposition? In Libya, the opposition openly included jihadists, included al-Qaeda elements. In Syria, right now, the al-Qaeda elements are *leading* the opposition.... According to the different sources I spoke to, what we have here is a U.S. policy of arming rebels, knowing or not knowing — but I can't understand how they would not know — that many of these rebels are jihadists."

Consistent History

These revelations are not at all shocking to those who are familiar with the Obama administration's record of support for virulently anti-American Islamists in Libya, including those closely allied with al-Qaeda. As we have reported previously in *The New American*, the Obama administration's "Arab Spring" strategy infamously embraced terror "Emir" Abdelhakim Belhadj and his Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.

The LIFG's role in Libya as an al-Qaeda franchise was no secret. A 2007 study by the Combating Terrorism Center at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point entitled *Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq* reported:

Recent political developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the prevalence of Libyan fighters in



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Iraq, and evidence of a well-established smuggling route for Libyans through Egypt, suggests that Libyan factions (primarily the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group) are increasingly important in al-Qa'ida.

The West Point study by Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman is based on an extensive cache of documents captured by U.S. forces in the Sinjar District of Iraq, including profiles of hundreds of foreign fighters who were engaged in killing U.S. and NATO personnel.

The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group is listed by our National Counterterrorism Center and the [U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism](#) as a "Designated Foreign Terrorist Organization." The United Nations Security Council likewise lists the LIFG as an al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group. Nevertheless, Abdelhakim Belhadj and the LIFG received blessings (and aid) from the Obama administration. After Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi was overthrown, Belhadj was installed as the chief of the Military Council in the new U.S.-backed "rebel" regime in Tripoli. And Belhadj is only one of several notorious terrorists aided by the United States in our "humanitarian intervention" in Libya.

Aid for Terrorists but Not for Americans

However, while the Obama administration appears to have been hell-bent on providing aid to some of the worst terrorist elements in Libya, it repeatedly denied basic security to the Americans who were tasked with carrying out its policies. One thing that is not disputed is the fact that in the months leading up to the September 11 attacks on the U.S. compounds in Benghazi, the area had become increasingly dangerous and Ambassador Stevens and others had repeatedly requested that security be beefed up. Those requests fell on deaf ears. At a hearing before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on October 10, security officers testified concerning their exasperation at being denied increased security by State Department higher-ups during the escalating violence occurring around them in Libya.

"We were fighting a losing battle. We couldn't even keep what we had," [said Lt. Col. Andrew Wood](#), former head of a 16-member U.S. military team that helped protect the embassy in Tripoli.

A February 2012 e-mail from foreign-service officer Shawn P. Crowley to Eric A. Nordstrom, then chief security officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, about the "lack of security" at the compound in Benghazi paints a grim picture. "Apologies for being a broken record, but beginning tomorrow, Benghazi will be down two agents," Crowley wrote, noting that "we have no drivers and new local guard contract employees have no experience driving armored vehicles."

The State Department's Eric Nordstrom was likewise frustrated and testified regarding a conversation he had with a State Department official when asking for more agents on the ground. After being denied the requested security detail, [Nordstrom said he told the State Department official](#):

You know what (is) most frustrating about this assignment? It's not the hardships, it's not the gunfire, it's not the threats. It's dealing and fighting against the people, programs and personnel who are supposed to be supporting me.... For me, the Taliban is on the inside of the building.

On October 19, Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) and National Security Subcommittee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) sent President Obama a letter and 166 pages of documents related to security threats and the process of "normalization" in Libya. The letter requested that the White House respond to questions about its role in the decision to have the U.S. diplomatic mission in Libya pursue a course of "normalization" that was intended to help create the perception of success in Libya and contrast it to U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.



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The letter by Reps. Issa and Chaffetz [states](#):

Information supplied to the committee by senior officials demonstrates that not only did the administration repeatedly reject requests for increased security despite escalating violence, but it also systematically decreased existing security to dangerous and ineffective levels. We have been told repeatedly that the administration did this to effectuate a policy of “normalization” in Libya after the conclusion of its civil war. These actions not only resulted in extreme vulnerability, but also undermined Ambassador Stevens and the diplomatic mission.

“Multiple warnings about security threats were contained in Ambassador Stevens’ own words in multiple cables sent to Washington, D.C., and were manifested by two prior bombings of the Benghazi compound and an assassination attempt on the British ambassador,” the Issa-Chaffetz letter continued. “The American people deserve nothing less than a full explanation from this administration about these events, including why the repeated warnings about a worsening security situation appear to have been ignored by this administration. Americans also deserve a complete explanation about your administration’s decision to accelerate a normalized presence in Libya at what now appears to be at the cost of endangering American lives. These critical foreign policy decisions are not made by low or mid-level career officials — they are typically made through a structured and well-reasoned process that includes the National Security Council at the White House.”

Rather than respond substantively to the serious questions posed by the committee chairmen, the White House and its surrogates in Congress and the media went on the attack, accusing Chairman Issa of leaking classified documents that compromised national security and endangered the lives of Libyans, by revealing the identities of those who are cooperating with the United States. However, a perusal of the documents appears to bear out Rep. Issa’s assertion that these claims by Obama defenders are baseless and are aimed at diverting attention from the ongoing coverup of a Libyan policy that was, at best, irresponsible.

In an October 28 op-ed in the *Washington Times* entitled [“Obama needs to come clean on what happened in Benghazi,”](#) retired Admiral James A. Lyons charged that there is “an urgent need for full disclosure of what has become the ‘Benghazi Betrayal and Cover-up.’”

“The Obama national security team, including CIA, DNI and the Pentagon, apparently watched and listened to the assault on the U.S. consulate and cries for help but did nothing,” wrote Adm. Lyons, who was commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

“If someone had described a fictional situation with a similar scenario and described our leadership ignoring the pleas for help, I would have said it was not realistic — not in my America — but I would have been proven wrong,” he continued.

According to Adm. Lyons:

We now know why Ambassador Christopher Stevens had to be in Benghazi the night of 9/11 to meet a Turkish representative, even though he feared for his safety. According to various reports, one of Stevens’ main missions in Libya was to facilitate the transfer of much of Gadhafi’s military equipment, including the deadly SA-7 — portable SAMs — to Islamists and other al Qaeda-affiliated groups fighting the Assad Regime in Syria....

Once the attack commenced at 10:00 p.m. Libyan time (4:00 p.m. EST), we know the mission security staff immediately contacted Washington and our embassy in Tripoli. It now appears the White House, Pentagon, State Department, CIA, NDI, JCS and various other military commands monitored the entire



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battle in real time via frantic phone calls from our compound and video from an overhead drone. The cries for help and support went unanswered.

“Our Benghazi mission personnel, including our two former Navy SEALs, fought for seven hours without any assistance other than help from our embassy in Tripoli, which launched within 30 minutes an aircraft carrying six Americans and 16 Libyan security guards,” Adm. Lyons noted. “It is understood they were instrumental in helping 22 of our Benghazi mission personnel escape the attack.”

Was there more that could have been done? Absolutely, says Adm. Lyons. “The Obama national security team, including CIA, DNI, State Department and the Pentagon, watched and listened to the assault but did nothing to answer repeated calls for assistance,” he charged. “It has been reported that President Obama met with Vice President Joseph R. Biden and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta in the Oval Office, presumably to see what support could be provided. After all, we had very credible military resources within striking distance. At our military base in Sigonella, Sicily, which is slightly over 400 miles from Benghazi, we had a fully equipped Special Forces unit with both transport and jet strike aircraft prepositioned. Certainly this was a force much more capable than the 22-man force from our embassy in Tripoli.”

Adm. Lyons stated:

I know those Special Forces personnel were ready to leap at the opportunity. There is no doubt in my mind they would have wiped out the terrorists attackers....

I also understand we had a C-130 gunship available, which would have quickly disposed of the terrorist attackers. This attack went on for seven hours. Our fighter jets could have been at our Benghazi mission within an hour. Our Special Forces out of Sigonella could have been there within a few hours. There is not any doubt that action on our part could have saved the lives of our two former Navy SEALs and possibly the ambassador.

“Having been in a number of similar situations, I know you have to have the courage to do what’s right and take immediate action,” says Adm. Lyons. “Obviously, that courage was lacking for Benghazi. The safety of your personnel always remains paramount. With all the technology and military capability we had in theater, for our leadership to have deliberately ignored the pleas for assistance is not only incomprehensible, it is un-American. Somebody high up in the administration made the decision that no assistance (outside our Tripoli embassy) would be provided, and let our people be killed. The person who made that callous decision needs to be brought to light and held accountable.”

Adm. Lyons’ charges followed reports on FOX News on October 26 that operators at the CIA annex in Benghazi, about a mile from the compound where Ambassador Stevens was under attack, had been ordered to “stand down” rather than respond when the initial attack began. Charles Woods, the father of ex-Navy SEAL Tyrone Woods, who was killed in a later attack on the CIA annex, went on a number of radio and television programs to blast President Obama and Secretary Clinton for their “cowardice” in failing to protect his son and the other trapped Americans.

In an interview on the nationally broadcast Lars Larson radio show, Woods told of meeting Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton at the publicly broadcast memorial service for the slain Americans at Andrews Air Force Base only days after the attack.

“When [Obama] came over to our little area” at Andrews Air Force Base, said Woods, “he kind of just mumbled, you know, ‘I’m sorry.’ His face was looking at me, but his eyes were looking over my shoulder like he could not look me in the eye. And it was not a sincere, ‘I’m really sorry, you know, that your son



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died,' but it was totally insincere, more of whining type, 'I'm sorry.'"

Woods said that shaking President Obama's hands at his son's memorial service was "like shaking hands with a dead fish." "It just didn't feel right," he said of his meeting with Obama. "And now that it's coming out that apparently the White House situation room was watching our people die in real time, as this was happening," Woods said.

Team Obama responded to these revelations with more stonewalling and denial. Retired U.S. Army General Jack Keane, former Army vice chief of staff, was trotted out on National Public Radio to provide a plausible timeline and an explanation of why more was not done to aid the besieged Americans in Benghazi. Gen. Keane, interestingly, conceded that the Benghazi compound "was essentially defenseless." "And we should never have left it in a defenseless status that it was in," said Keane. "That was certainly tragic and, frankly, irresponsible." But, said Gen. Keane, the administration did everything possible to assist the Americans in Benghazi once they came under attack. According to Keane, we did not have the proper assets at our Sigonella base to reach the besieged compounds in time.

Steve Elson, an ex-Navy SEAL, says he doesn't buy Gen. Keane's explanation. "That's more coverup," he told *The New American*. "From my experience, and knowing the assets available to the military and Special Ops units, I would say that Admiral Lyons' assessment is far more credible," said Elson. "Lyons has been in charge of the Pacific and has utilized those assets. There's no way that fight should have gone on for 6-7 hours without air assistance at least. Our jets could have been there within an hour."

"The Benghazi response — or, more accurately, Obama's *failure* to respond in Benghazi — is completely in keeping with this administration's record," Elson said. "It fits completely with his traitorous ROE [rules of engagement] for our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, which had them going on patrol and facing the enemy without being allowed to have their weapons loaded! How can you order men into battle and then handcuff them like that? It's immoral and treasonous! I don't pull any punches or mince words on that, and I can assure you all of the soldiers, sailors, marines, special operators I've talked to feel the same way. And Benghazi is just more of the same."

An active-duty Navy SEAL who asked to remain anonymous concurred with Steve Elson. "Everyone in the Special Ops community detests the way Obama exploited the [Osama] bin Laden takedown," says the SEAL. "He rushed to reveal sensitive sources and methods to score political points, to appear macho, even though it compromises future operations and endangers our lives. To him it didn't matter; we're expendable, like the Americans in Benghazi."

"If Congress and the American people allow President Obama to get away with this," Steve Elson told *The New American*, "we'll be seeing repetitions of it happening all across the globe."

— Photo: AP Images

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