



## Former State Dept. Official: Clinton Allies Censored Benghazi Docs

Raymond Maxwell, former deputy assistant secretary of state at the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) told Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) that a team overseen by Hillary Clinton's chief of staff and deputy chief of staff removed politically damaging documents before turning over files to the Accountability Review Board (ARB) investigating the Benghazi terror attack.

The House Select Committee on Benghazi, which was authorized by H. Res. 567 to conduct a full and complete investigation and study of the events surrounding the 2012 terrorist attack in Benghazi and issue a final report of its findings to the House, will hold its first open hearing on September 17.

As the committee was preparing for its first hearing, Maxwell shared his finding with the *Daily Signal*, an online publication of the Heritage Foundation.

The *Daily Signal* report by Sharyl Attkisson cited Maxwell's recollection that the after-hours session in which he witnessed the Clinton aides going through the documents took place over a weekend in a basement operations-type center at State Department headquarters in Washington, D.C.

"I was not invited to that after-hours endeavor, but I heard about it and decided to check it out on a Sunday afternoon," said Maxwell.

Maxwell told Attkisson that the ARB probe was "at best, a shoddily executed attempt at damage control, both in Foggy Bottom and on Capitol Hill." He regards the weekend operation he witnessed in the State Department basement as "an exercise in misdirection."

"What they were looking for is anything that made them look bad. That's the way it was described to us," Chaffetz, who privately interviewed Maxwell last year, told Fox News on September 15. Chaffetz described Maxwell's account as "consistent" over the past year. The congressman told Fox that he is now publicly relating the details of his interview with Maxwell last year because Maxwell himself has just gone public with them in his interview with the *Daily Signal*.

Maxwell said that when he went into the office on a Sunday afternoon, an office director who worked for him — but who hadn't told him about the assignment to go through the documents — told him: "Ray, we are to go through these stacks and pull out anything that might put anybody in the [Near Eastern Affairs] front office or the seventh floor in a bad light." He explained that "seventh floor" was State Department shorthand for then-Secretary of State Clinton and her principal advisers.

"I asked her, 'But isn't that unethical?' She responded, 'Ray, those are our orders.' "

Maxwell told Chaffetz he "didn't feel good about it" and left a short time later.





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Chaffetz said that he was told that then-Clinton Chief of Staff Cheryl Mills and Deputy Chief of Staff Jake Sullivan were present and were overseeing the document purging operation.

“For Hillary Clinton’s personal chief of staff and deputy chief of staff to be making a concerted effort to hide documents, [to] make sure that the Accountability Review Board and Congress did not see those documents is unbelievable and absolutely wrong,” Chaffetz said.

In response to Maxwell’s allegations, Alec Gerlach, a State Department spokesman, called the charge that documents were withheld “totally without merit.” Gerlach said: “The range of sources that the ARB’s investigation drew on would have made it impossible for anyone outside of the ARB to control its access to information.”

Maxwell told the *Daily Signal* that he has been interviewed privately by several members of Congress in recent months, including Chaffetz, a member of the House Oversight Committee, and Rep. Trey Gowdy, (R-S.C.) chairman of the House Select Committee on Benghazi.

Chaffetz told the *Daily Signal*: “The allegations are as serious as it gets, and it’s something we have obviously followed up and pursued. I’m 100 percent confident the Benghazi Select Committee is going to dive deep on that issue.”

At the heart of the House Select Committee on Benghazi’s hearings is an attempt to determine the truth surrounding the events of September 11, 2012, when Islamic militants attacked the American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, killing U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and U.S. Foreign Service Information Management Officer Sean Smith. Several hours later, a second assault targeted another compound about a mile away, killing two CIA contractors, Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty.

State Department officials were criticized for denying requests for additional security at the consulate prior to the attack, and Secretary of State Clinton took responsibility for the poor security.

Speaking at the Iowa GOP Lincoln Day fundraising dinner in Cedar Rapids last year, Sen. Rand Paul, whom some believe may face Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential contest, leveled strong accusations at Clinton, criticizing her failure to respond to requests for additional security in the months leading up to the armed attack on the diplomatic mission in Benghazi.

“It was inexcusable, it was a dereliction of duty, and it should preclude her from holding higher office,” Paul said.

Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee before leaving office in January 2013, Clinton said she had not personally seen the cables from Libya requesting more security. Paul, a committee member, told Clinton at that hearing: “Had I been president at the time and I had found that you had not read the cables from Benghazi, you had not read the cables from Ambassador Stevens, I would have relieved you of your post.”

Clinton kept her job, but Maxwell was one of four State Department officials who were disciplined following the attack. He was put on administrative leave, and was eventually cleared, but retired last year. A CBS News report on May 19, 2013 noted: “It’s unclear as to exactly what Maxwell and the other disciplined managers allegedly did wrong or how they were chosen for discipline.”

Attkisson noted in her *Daily Signal* report that several weeks after he was placed on leave Maxwell made an appointment to discuss his status with a State Department ombudsman. He said, “She told me, ‘You are taking this all too personally, Raymond. It is not about you.’ “ “I told her that ‘My name is on



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TV and I'm on administrative leave, it seems like it's about me.' Then she said, 'You're not harmed, you're still getting paid. Don't watch TV. Take your wife on a cruise. It's not about you; it's about Hillary and 2016.' "

It will interesting to see what the House Select Committee on Benghazi's hearings this week discover, and what effect the findings will have on Clinton's viability as a presidential candidate in 2016.

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