

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 15, 2012 7:48 AM
To: Cheryl Mills
Subject: FW: Libya Narratives and Major Stories - October 15, 2012
Attachments: 101512 - Libya Narratives and Major Stories.docx

LIBYA NARRATIVES and MAJOR STORIES – Monday, October 15, 2012

(covering updates from 0700 10/14 to 0600 10/15)

Summary of Selected Major Stories

- **On Sunday shows, GOP steps up criticism over Libya attacks** [WSJ and others, October 14]
 - Sen. Graham: “Either [administration officials] are misleading the American people or they’re incredibly incompetent.”
 - Graham says administration’s initial response was to uphold a rosy narrative of success in Libya and in the wider fight with al-Qaeda.
 - Political operatives from both campaigns spar over the attack.
- **NYT Editorial – No Shame: Republicans in House more interested in attacking President Obama; hypocrisy is apparent as they voted to cut security budget** [October 15 print edition]
 - While House Republicans have cut funding for security in years past, perhaps they will see fit to provide the money now.
 - There will always have to be a balance between security and the work of diplomats: “More spending on security improvements will certainly help but there will still be threats and risk.”
- **WaPo Editorial – Justice in Benghazi: Libya investigation has parallels with struggles faced investigating USS Cole bombing; best option is trial in U.S. courts** [October 15 print edition]
 - Like in Yemen in 2000, FBI efforts are being stymied and a weak Libyan government lacks ability to bring justice itself.
 - Among the lessons to be learned from USS Cole: justice via U.S. courts is better than justice delivered by drones.
- **Father of Amb. Stevens: death should not be politicized in presidential campaign** [Bloomberg, October 14]
 - Jan Stevens says, “it would really be abhorrent to make this into a campaign issue,” and that “the security matters are being adequately investigated...it does not belong in the campaign arena.”

Updates to Ongoing Narratives

- **Security and Requests Before Attack:** No major developments to this narrative. The security posture is discussed in general by Reps. Issa and Cummings on CBS’s Face the Nation (see below). Jennifer Rubin of WaPo, a frequent critic of the administration, writes a series of unanswered questions she has on her blog, with one specifically pertaining to S: “When, if ever, did Secretary of State Hillary Clinton become aware that there was a request for more security in Benghazi before 9-11-2012?”
- **Tick-Tock Day Of:** No updates.

- **Congressional Issues:** The wires and major national newspapers all run articles summarizing the Sunday show appearances by Congressional players and political operatives. Most frequently, these articles lead with Sen. Graham's comments on CBS, which are said to show increased GOP criticism. For example, he is widely quoted accusing the Administration of a cover-up (see below). But he is also quoted across the board saying that the President's foreign policy is "unraveling;" that the administration is "trying to sell a narrative about the Mideast that the wars are receding and that al-Qaeda is being defeated;" and that "when something goes bad,[administration officials] deny, they deceive and they delay."

Reps. Issa and Cummings appeared in separate interviews on CBS where neither said anything extremely newsworthy, both continuing their talking points from the previous week. Issa defended House Republicans against charges they cut funding, saying there was money sitting in a State Department discretionary fund that could have been used. Cummings assailed how the issue has become "political football" and a "witch hunt." He says there is a lot to be answered but it is too early to come to conclusions, pointing to the S-appointed ARB and the FBI investigation as the proper means to investigate.

The Cummings-backed narrative that House Republicans are turning Benghazi into a highly partisan and campaign-driven exercise is significantly advanced by the NYT editorial, which argues that Republican lawmakers "seem more interested in attacking President Obama than in formulating an effective response." The editorial focuses on the half billion cut in the recent budgets from the State Department's security accounts. These cuts are then contrasted with Issa's recent quotes that lawmakers have an obligation to protect federal workers.

- **Stonewalling / Cover-Up / Investigation:** By far, the most frequently picked up quote from the Sunday shows came from Sen. Graham: "Either [administration officials] are misleading the American people or they're incredibly incompetent." This was included in nearly every piece on the topic, including Reuters, WSJ, CNN, and WaPo. Featuring it even more prominently, AP used the headline: "GOP senator alleges White House cover-up on Libya attack, Obama 'misleading' or 'incompetent.'"

In terms of the investigation, reports on David Axelrod's appearance on Fox News quote him saying "There is nobody on this planet more concerned about getting to the bottom of this than the President ." The written report from Foxnews.com notes that this directly echoes what S said in the aftermath of the attack.

- **Responsibility:** In a minor development, when pressed by CNN's Candy Crowley on whether or not the President was responsible for the attack, Robert Gibbs said: "The administration is responsible."
- **Interagency Issues:** In pick-up of the Sunday shows, there is continued focus on the Vice President's comments in the debate, which appeared to contradict State Department testimony. Several news outlets note that David Axelrod and Robert Gibbs strongly defended the Vice President, with them noting he was speaking for the White House, not the administration. For example, Axelrod, speaking on Fox News, said "There are no doubts that these security measures went into the State Department." Also, Jennifer Rubin has a blog post on Washingtonpost.com focusing on the question: where is CIA Director General Petraeus and will he stand up to defend his agency?

From: Lieberman, Dean

Sent: Monday, October 15, 2012 6:44 AM

To: PA Libya; Coordination; SARB; Mills, Cheryl D; Adams, David S; Verma, Richard R; Kennedy, Patrick F; Boswell, Eric

J; Sullivan, Jacob J; Reines, Philippe I; Klevorick, Caitlin B

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