

RELEASE IN FULL

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From: OpsNewsTicker@state.gov [mailto:OpsNewsTicker@state.gov]
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Subject: Inquiry Into Libya Attack Is Sharply Critical of State Dept. (NYT)

WASHINGTON (New York Times) - An independent inquiry into the attack on the United States diplomatic mission in Libya that killed four Americans on Sept. 11 sharply criticizes the State Department for a lack of seasoned security personnel and relying on untested local militias to safeguard the compound, Congressional and State Department officials said Tuesday night.

The investigation into the attacks on the diplomatic mission and C.I.A. annex that killed Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three others also faulted State Department officials in Washington for ignoring requests from officials at the American Embassy in Tripoli for more guards and safety upgrades to the diplomatic mission.

The panel also blamed the State Department for waiting for specific warnings of imminent attacks to act rather than adapting security procedures and protocols to a deteriorating security environment. By this spring, Benghazi, a hotbed of militant activity in eastern Libya, had experienced a string of assassinations and attacks, including one on a British envoy's motorcade.

Finally, the report also blamed two major State Department bureaus — diplomatic security and Near Eastern affairs — for failing to coordinate and plan adequate security at the mission. The panel also determined that a number of officials had shown poor leadership.

In response to the panel's findings, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in a letter to Congress that she was accepting all 29 of the panel's recommendations, several of which are classified.

Mrs. Clinton is taking specific steps to correct the problems, according to officials. They say the State Department is asking permission from Congress to transfer \$1.3 billion from funds that had been allocated for spending in Iraq. This includes \$553 million for additional Marine security guards; \$130 million for diplomatic security personnel; and \$691 million for improving security at installations abroad.

On Monday, an independent panel that was established to investigate the attack presented the report to the State Department. The panel, called an accountability review board, is led by Thomas R. Pickering, a veteran diplomat. It includes four other members, among them Mike Mullen, the retired admiral who served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The board is authorized by a 1986 law intended to strengthen security at United States diplomatic missions.

The State Department sent a lengthy classified version of the report to Congress on Tuesday. Mr. Pickering and Admiral Mullen are scheduled to meet with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee in closed session on Wednesday.

On Thursday, William J. Burns and Thomas R. Nides, both deputy secretaries of States, will testify to both panels. Mrs. Clinton, who is still recovering from a concussion she suffered last week after fainting while sick from a stomach flu, is at home this week. The head of the House panel, Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Florida Republican, however, has made clear that she planned to ask Mrs. Clinton to testify at a future time.