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BENGAZI AFFAIR REFUSES TO DIE – NEW TESTIMONY SUGGESTS COVER-UP, TALK IN GOP OF IMPEACHMENT

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WHY THE BENGAZI AFFAIR IS STILL SO IMPORTANT

Barry Rubin

Jewish Press, May 12, 2013

There is something terribly and tragically and importantly symbolic about the Benghazi attack that may be lost in the tidal wave of details about what happened on September 11, 2012, in an incident where four American officials were murdered in a terrorist attack. This point stands at the heart of everything that has happened in American society and intellectual life during the last decade.

And that point is this: America was attacked once again on that September 11, attacked by al Qaeda in an attempt to destroy the United States—as ridiculous as that goal might seem. Yet the U.S. government blamed the attack on America itself.

Other reasons can be adduced for the official position that what happened that day was due to a video insulting Islam rather than to a terrorist attack, but this is the factor of overwhelming importance. It transformed the situation in the following ways:

–Muslims were the victims of American misbehaviour, a point emerging from the administration's wider worldview of U.S. aggression and Third World suffering, as in the lectures of all those left-wing anti-American academics and the sermons of Jeremiah Wright.

–“Hate speech” and racism (as “Islamophobia” is often reconfigured) was the cause of troubles, with the implication that while freedom of speech and such liberties should be defended they must be limited in some ways to prevent further trouble.

–America’s proper posture should be one of apology, as in the advertisements that Secretary of State Hilary Clinton made for the Pakistani and other media.

–The “misblaming,” to coin a word, on the video showed terrorist groups that not only can they attack Americans but they can do so without fear of punishment or even of blame! As the House of Representatives’ hearings show, the misattribution of responsibility also delayed the FBI’s investigation, perhaps conclusively so.

–The exercise of American power has been the cause of America’s problems and not an excess of appeasement. The chickens—in Wright’s phrase—are merely coming home to roost. Yet once the video—which nobody in the Middle East was aware of—appeared there were in fact further anti-American riots in different countries, now over the video which Clinton and others made known, and in which dozens of people died. This showed that appeasement and apology caused worse problems.

–The solution to these Middle East conflicts required a change in U.S. policies in order to avoid further offense. This meant distancing from Israel and even historic Arab allies, showing respect and encouragement even for “moderate” Islamist movements, and other measures.

In short, this is the stance of blaming America and exonerating its enemies that has seized hold of the national consciousness. Of course, parallel responses met the Boston bombing as the mass media and academics scrambled to give alternative explanations to the terrorists’ motives.

The truth is, however, extremely simple: The United States faces a revolutionary Islamist movement that will neither go away nor moderate itself. To understand this movement and its ideology, how it is and is not rooted in Islam, its weaknesses and divisions, the forces willing to help combat it, and ways to devise strategies to battle it is the prime international need for the moment.

It is as necessary to do these things for revolutionary Islamism today as it was to do the same things regarding Nazism in the 1930s and 1940s; and for Communism in the 1940s and 1950s. Yet the U.S. armed forces and other institutions are forbidden from holding this inquiry. There are, of course, additional issues raised, though many of them also have far deeper significance:

–The failure of the Obama Administration to defend and rescue Americans in Benghazi is equivalent to its failures to defend American interests around the world.

–The fear of using American power in Libya that day parallels the overall retreat from the traditional bipartisan policies of credibility, deterrence, and all the other things in a great power’s lexicon.

–The standpoint that it is better to let Americans die than to risk offending certain groups. That might seem harsh but when it was decided not to send a rescue mission that was precisely what was happening.

–A lack of competence by a president who didn’t know his duty and by high-ranking subordinates who would not remind him of that duty.

–The perfect symbolism of the president of the United States going to sleep in the face of a crisis, the living embodiment of a 2008 election ad by his opponent about whether he would deal with a crisis that erupted at 3 AM.

–The perfect symbolism of the secretary of state being the one who put out that ad and who then said, “What difference does it make” regarding the attackers’ motives.

–The fact that the cover-up seems to be involved with the administration’s need to declare victory over al Qaeda. Not only is that claim untrue but the idea that if al Qaeda is defeated there is no more threat from revolutionary Islamism is the central bad theme of Administration Middle East policy.

–The issue of why the ambassador was in Benghazi that day. Remember that President Obama stood before the United Nations General Assembly and said that he was there to plan a new school and hospital wing. Was he telling an outright lie?

Was the ambassador there in an attempt to retrieve advanced weapons previously provided to Libyan Islamist groups in the war against the Qadhafi dictatorship because they could be turned against America? Well, such weapons were turned against America that day. If so, the situation showed the bankruptcy of the pro-Islamist policy.

Or was it an effort to funnel weapons to the Syrian rebels, in a policy likely to repeat the problems in Libya? If so, the situation showed the bankruptcy of the pro-Islamist policy. And finally what could be more symbolic than the hiring of Islamist terrorists to guard the consulate, men who deserted or even turned their guns against the Americans there? It is truly symbolic because the Obama Administration has turned to Islamists—in Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey, Syria, and elsewhere—in the belief that they are best suited to guard U.S. interests in the Middle East.

In discussing the Benghazi affair none of these broader issues should be forgotten. It was not merely an order for the American rescue forces to “stand down” but for the United States to bow down.

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THE BENGHAZI BATTLE

Andrew Stiles

[National Review](#), May 8, 2013

Gregory Hicks’s personal account of the tragic night of September 11, 2012, in Benghazi, Libya, offered some of the most compelling public testimony to date regarding the deadly terrorist attacks that left four Americans dead, including U.S. ambassador Christopher Stevens.

The former deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Tripoli, who appeared before the House Oversight Committee on Tuesday, is the first person who was actually in Libya the night of the attacks to testify publicly. Hicks’s comments, which raised serious questions about the Obama administration’s handling of the attacks and their aftermath, are sure to fuel Republican efforts to expose a potential cover-up.

A decorated and widely praised 22-year veteran of the State Department, Hicks recalled being “stunned” and “embarrassed” watching U.N. ambassador Susan Rice’s now-infamous appearances on the Sunday-talk-show circuit, where she claimed that the Benghazi attacks were the result of spontaneous “demonstrations” inspired by an anti-Islamic YouTube video — a claim that President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and other administration officials maintained for eleven days following the attack. “The YouTube video was a non-event in Libya,” Hicks said. “The only event that transpired was the attack on our consulate.”

Hicks said there was no doubt among U.S. personnel on the ground that the Benghazi attacks were carried out by terrorists — they were well aware that the terror group Ansar al-Sharia had quickly claimed credit on Twitter. In gripping testimony, he recalled how his team in Tripoli loaded ammunition into armored vehicles, smashed hard drives, and fled to a safe house in anticipation of an attack on the embassy in the capital city. He also described “the saddest phone call” he had ever received, when the Libyan prime minister told him that Ambassador Stevens was dead. An audience of more than a hundred staffers, reporters, and lawmakers hung on his every word.

Hicks was so shaken by Rice’s remarks on the Sunday shows that he contacted Beth Jones, the acting assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs, to ask why the U.N. ambassador had incorrectly blamed the attacks on a video. “Her reaction was ‘I don’t know,’ and it was very clear from the tone that I should not proceed any further,” Hicks told members of the committee. He cited this exchange as the beginning of

a problematic relationship with the administration, which ultimately led to his demotion from deputy mission chief to mere “desk officer.”

This testimony comes amid concerns that the State Department has been intimidating potential witnesses who have knowledge of the attacks and are seeking to testify. The three witnesses present at Wednesday’s hearing were repeatedly referred to as “whistleblowers.” Hicks made clear that the administration has sought to keep him on a tight leash, and his recounting of one particular interaction with Cheryl Mills, State Department general counsel and former chief of staff to Secretary Clinton, is sure to stoke the passions of Republicans eager to pin blame on the prospective 2016 nominee.

Hicks said that administration lawyers had instructed him not to meet in Libya with a congressional delegation led by Representative Jason Chaffetz (R., Utah) in the wake of the attack — the first time in his career he had ever received such a request. Hicks took the meeting, but a State Department lawyer who tried to sit in was barred because he lacked a security clearance. Hicks later received an angry phone call from Mills demanding a report from the meeting. “A phone call from that near a person [to the secretary of state] is generally not considered to be good news,” Hicks said.

Democrats, on the other hand, spent much of the hearing attempting to absolve Clinton of any blame, as well as (tactfully) cast doubt on many of Hicks’s claims. They pointed to a recent report released by the State Department’s Accountability Review Board (ARB), which found that Clinton was not responsible for the “inadequate” security at the Benghazi consulate prior to the attack. Republicans noted, with some skepticism toward the findings, that Clinton herself was never interviewed by the board. The ARB did interview Hicks, but he expressed frustration that he was never able to review its classified report.

The White House would clearly prefer to put an end to questions about its role during the Benghazi attacks and in the immediate aftermath, but Republicans aren’t going to let them off so easily. Wednesday’s hearing may not have changed many minds, but it showed that further questions are justified, and ought to be answered.

White House press secretary Jay Carney may think that September 11, 2012, was “a long time ago,” but as Representative Trey Gowdy (R., S.C.) said at one point during the hearing, “there is no statute of limitations to finding out the truth.”

DID CLINTON AND OBAMA BELIEVE THEIR BENGHAZI BALONEY?

Michael Barone

[Real Clear Politics](#), May 13, 2013

What were Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton thinking? Why did they keep pitching the line that the 9/11/12 Benghazi attack that killed Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans started as a spontaneous protest against an anti-Muslim video? One possible explanation is confusion. There was such an attack on our embassy in Cairo earlier that day that fit that description.

When Hillary Clinton on Sept. 14 talked of a “mob” and “violent attacks” over the caskets of the Americans slain in Benghazi, she could have been referring to the attacks in Cairo. In that case, she would not exactly be lying, as many have charged. But she would have been misleading people, quite possibly intentionally. We know that she assured one victim’s father, Charles Wood, that “we’re going to prosecute that person that made the video.” Not entirely successfully, by the way. “I knew she was lying,” Woods said after the House committee hearing on Benghazi last week.

It’s hard to escape the conclusion that Clinton was knowingly attempting to mislead. She certainly knows the difference between Cairo and Benghazi. And it’s undisputed that Gregory Hicks, the No. 2 man in our Libya embassy, reported that it was an “attack” on Sept. 11. That was the word he heard in his last conversation with Chris Stevens. It’s undisputed as well, after testimony at the House committee hearing

last week, that Beth Jones, acting head of State's Near Eastern Division, emailed on Sept. 12 that "the group that conducted the attacks, Ansar al-Shariah, is affiliated with Islamic terrorists."

That email went to Clinton counselor Cheryl Mills and State Department spokesman Victoria Nuland, among others. You may remember Mills as one of the lawyers defending Bill Clinton in his impeachment trial. On Sept. 15, the day after Clinton's assurances to Woods, State Department and White House officials prepared talking points for members of Congress and for Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice, who was scheduled to go on five Sunday talk shows the next day.

Who chose Rice as the administration's spokesman? As Barack Obama said after the election, when she was reportedly under consideration to be the next secretary of state, Rice had "nothing to do" with Benghazi. Selecting which officials go on the Sunday talk show is a White House function. Either the president or someone who had good reason to believe he was reflecting his wishes selected someone who was out of the loop on the issue. The expectation must have been that she would say exactly what she was told -- and would not betray any inconvenient facts known to those in the loop like Clinton.

The Weekly Standard's Stephen Hayes got hold of the series of Sept. 15 emails in which White House and State Department officials prepared the talking points. Deleted were references to warnings State received before Sept. 11 of Ansar al-Sharia and al-Qaida-linked attacks in Benghazi. Nuland describes these as "issues ... of my building leadership."

The final talking points said "the currently available information suggests that the demonstration in Benghazi were spontaneously inspired by the protests at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo and evolved into a direct assault against the U.S. diplomatic post and subsequently its annex." Rice went on TV and parroted the line. That was refuted by Hicks. The video was a "non-event" in Libya, he told the House committee. And he testified that he was chastised by none other than Mills for briefing Republican Rep. Jason Chaffetz without a lawyer present.

The FBI did not find time to interview Hicks. But State did find time to yank him out of his job and give him a desk job he regards as a demotion. Obama continued to attribute the Benghazi attack to a protest against a video on Sept. 18 ("Letterman"), Sept. 20 (Univision) and Sept. 25 ("The View" and the United Nations).

There were obvious cynical political motives for attempting to mislead voters during a closely contested presidential campaign. Obama did not want his theme of "Osama is dead, al-Qaida is on the run" to be undercut by an Islamist terrorist attack on our ambassador. Clinton did not want her department's denial of pleas for additional security in Libya to become known. But maybe they were also trying to deceive themselves. Which may be even more disturbing.

Michael Barone is Senior Political Analyst for the Washington Examiner.

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WHY THE GOP MIGHT TRY TO IMPEACH OBAMA OVER BENGHAZI

Joshua Green

[Business Week](#), May 13, 2013

Throughout last year's campaign, President Obama assured voters skeptical of his ability to work with Republicans in Congress that his reelection would "break the fever" of implacable obstruction and finally persuade the GOP to submit to the will of the voters. That prediction quickly proved wrong. Instead of breaking, the fever has spiked.

Last week, with the White House struggling to contain scandals from Benghazi to IRS snooping, it culminated in a chorus of Republican calls to impeach Obama. "Of all the great coverups in history, the Pentagon papers, Iran-Contra, Watergate, all the rest of them," Republican Senator James Inhofe of

Oklahoma told a radio show host on Thursday, “this ... is going to go down as most egregious coverup in American history.” Former Arkansas governor and GOP presidential candidate Mike Huckabee predicted, “This president will not fill out his full term.” South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham called Benghazi “Obama’s Watergate.”

Right-wing calls to impeach Obama aren’t exactly new. (Salon has compiled 14 other instances.) But the combination of the Benghazi and IRS scandals has given them new force. So, presumably, has the eagerness of the Republican base to see such a fate befall the president they despise—a recent poll showed that half of Republicans favor impeachment.

The inclination of many liberals to fan the flames of impeachment has probably given oxygen to this crusade. Commentators from Jonathan Chait, a few years ago, to Michael Tomasky, just this morning, have predicted a Republican push for impeachment. And while none that I’m aware of has explicitly encouraged this push, many liberals privately view the prospect of a GOP impeachment attempt in the same way that Br’er Rabbit viewed getting tossed in the briar patch—as something that would quickly rebound to their benefit, just as the impeachment of Bill Clinton ultimately hurt the GOP in the 1998 elections.

One obvious obstacle is that Democrats control the Senate. While the GOP-led House could initiate impeachment proceedings, they wouldn’t get much further. At least for now. Inhofe indicated, though, that the issue could “endure” and move forward if Republicans take back the Senate in 2014. The combination of all these factors—Republican legislators’ thirst to deliver Obama his comeuppance, pressure from the base, tacit liberal provocation—would suggest that the “fever” is likelier to go higher still than it is to subside.

Green is senior national correspondent for Bloomberg Businessweek in Washington.

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ON TOPIC

[Seven Things We Learned from the Benghazi Whistleblower Hearing](#): [Bryan Preston, PJ Media, May 8, 2013](#)—The Republicans mishandled the Benghazi whistleblowers’ hearing. What should have been stretched across several days to give the nation time to digest it all, was instead packed into a single day filled with an overwhelming amount of information. The media’s attention span is not that long.

[The Benghazi Lie](#): [Mark Steyn, National Review, May 10, 2013](#)—Shortly before last November’s election I took part in a Fox News documentary on Benghazi, whose other participants included the former governor of New Hampshire John Sununu. Making chit-chat while the camera crew were setting up, Governor Sununu said to me that in his view Benghazi mattered because it was “a question of character.”

[Pentagon: Special Forces Would Not Have Saved Lives in Benghazi](#): [Dustin Walker, Real Clear Defense, May 8, 2013](#)—The Pentagon is pushing back on claims that a Special Operations unit could have saved lives if sent to Benghazi during the attack there last fall.

[Right Mauls Hillary Clinton Over Envoy's Murder in Benghazi](#): [Toby Harnden, Real Clear Politics, May 13, 2013](#)—In a temporary office beside a shopping mall in northern Virginia, half a dozen young Republican operatives were hunched over their computers as the House oversight committee questioned witnesses about last September’s deadly attack on the US consulate in Benghazi.