Retiring Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Roger's (R-MI) Benghazi report released last Friday, is deeply duplicitous in its wording, omissions and redactions. Given all that is known about Benghazi today, this report can be seen as a careful effort to leave a false impression.

Many are left wondering why would Mike Rogers do this on his way out of office, offering a report on a Friday before Thanksgiving week, which appears to be something of a gift to the intelligence community and the Obama Administration.

Where is the full-throated, detailed response by House Benghazi Select Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC)?

Here is a response from two key members of the Benghazi Accountability Coalition.

Response to Mike Roger's Benghazi report

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November 24, 2014

Late Friday, just as Congress scattered out of Washington for its Thanksgiving recess, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), with its outgoing chairman Mike Rogers (R-MI), dumped a controversial report on the Benghazi Massacre. The document is a classic Beltway dissimulation. More than two years after a terrorist attack by our wartime enemies against a U.S. compound whose purpose has yet to be explained, the "intelligence" specialists still can't – or won't – tell the nation what the commander-in-chief was doing for the eight hours while Americans fought for their lives against a siege in which U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other brave Americans were murdered.

The report does not begin to explain why they died. It purports to clear the administration and government agencies that recklessly reduced security despite serial terrorist attacks and threats in the months, weeks, days and hours leading up to the attack on the eleventh anniversary of the 9/11 attacks – a time during which other governments and international organizations had the good sense to pull their personnel out. It claims that there is "no evidence" that security personnel were impeded from coming to the rescue even though **three of them have publicly stated that they were ordered not to respond**. Echoing the discredited Obama administration, which has grudgingly conceded purging its infamous "talking points" of the obvious terrorist nature of the attack, the HPSCI report seeks to airbrush the jihadists behind it – al Qaeda affiliates, including leaders with longstanding ties to the terror network's hierarchy.

Congressional oversight committees have proved appallingly inept in getting to the bottom of what happened, and why, in Benghazi. Indeed, it has required independent investigations outside government to advance the cause of accountability. That is why a House Select Committee was finally convened – despite the objection of the oversight committee leaders who, like the HPSCI chairman, plainly do not want their half-hearted work checked.

In the first Select Committee hearing, Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC) pointedly asked a high-ranking State Department official *why* the Obama administration had American personnel working in Benghazi, one of the most dangerous places in the world for Americans. The State Department official would not answer the question. Neither, it turns out, will the HPSCI. It's carefully lawyered report states that it "found no evidence that the CIA conducted *unauthorized* activities in Benghazi[.]" **The American people want to know what *activities* – authorized or not – were being carried out in Benghazi by the United States government. We want to know why those activities left the United States government too paralyzed to respond while Americans were killed by our enemies, and why the United States government brazenly misled the American people in the aftermath.**

On the issuance of a "Stand Down" order

- In the Executive Summary, pg. 1, it says that "*...the Committee found no evidence that there was either a stand down order or a denial of available air support*."

- This statement is directly contradicted by accounts of events from the Global Response Staff (GRS) security personnel who served at the Annex and wrote the book, "*13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*."

- The HPSCI interviewed all members of the GRS as well as the Annex personnel - as has the newly appointed Select Committee chaired by Rep. Gowdy. It is inconceivable that the HPSCI is unaware of the GRS members' version of events. The evidence is known, public and available to all.

- According to team members, the senior CIA Chief of Base, (COB) 'Bob' specifically used the words "Stand down," "Hold up" and "You need to wait" - to keep security team members from going to aid of the besieged Special Mission Compound (SMC) for nearly half an hour - a delay team members firmly believe resulted in avoidable deaths of Amb. Stevens and Sean Smith. Former Obama administration Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has publicly stated that he had "no reason" to disbelieve the GRS members' assertion that they were impeded from responding to the attack. Thus, it is simply astonishing that the HPSCI would represent to the American people there is "no evidence" contradicting its findings.

On Intelligence Warning of Impending Attack

- Executive Summary states that "*the Committee finds that there was no intelligence failure prior to the attacks....IC provided intelligence about previous attacks & the increased threat environment in Benghazi, but the IC did not have specific, tactical warning of the September 11 attacks*."

- The wording here is patently lawyered and transparently evades the point. The question is not whether the IC had "specific, tactical warning" of the precise time, place and nature of the attack. The question is whether there was abundant warning that a terrorist attack was foreseeable – and that is not even debatable based on the series of jihadist attacks over the preceding months, the stream of jihadist threats, the rioting earlier in the day at the U.S. embassy in Cairo, and the fact that September 11 was the eleventh anniversary of al Qaeda's

atrocities of 9/11/01 that killed nearly 3000 Americans. If the neon-blinking likelihood of a terrorist attack had not been so apparent, there would have been no reason for Obama administration officials to expend such energy purging references to terrorism from their infamous "talking points" and laboring to convince Americans that the murderous attack was attributable to a non-factor video – rather than to the terrorists President Obama had been claiming to have "decimated" and put "on the path to defeat."

- The refusal of the State Department to heed warnings clearly provided by the CIA was a patent intelligence failure – as well as a reckless security failure.

- Two additional and glaring intelligence failures stand out:

  1) The issuance of al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri's September 10 video message on jihadist websites calling specifically on Libyans to rise up and attack Americans in revenge for CIA drone killing of his Libyan deputy, Abu Yahya al-Libi, a few months earlier. Annex security members have confirmed they knew nothing about this apparent attack green light to AQ in Libya - there is no excuse for this intelligence failure either.

  2) The failure to warn either Annex or SMC that immediately prior to September 11 that Muslim anger in Egypt and the broader Muslim Middle East began to boil over on social media sites (FB, Twitter) over the "Innocence of Muslims" YouTube video.

- Although in the end, there were no demonstrations or protests in Benghazi or Libya as a whole about that video, the alert should have gone to all US missions worldwide; yet, it was plainly not communicated to the security team members in Benghazi.

- Further, Annex security team members were not aware that, earlier in the day on September 11, 2012, the U.S. embassy in Cairo was being overrun by rioters, the perimeter wall breached, portions of the complex set aflame, the American flag torn down, etc. This failure to communicate what ought to have been considered a potential risk for similar incidents in Benghazi is especially glaring, in light not only of the overreaction to the Internet video but to the earlier reports of threats to the U.S. embassy in Cairo by jihadists affiliated with al Qaeda and Omar Abdel Rahman (the "Blind Sheikh" imprisoned for terrorism convictions in the United States).

- It should be noted here that even though Annex security team members were not privy to all incoming IC intelligence reporting, but instead were briefed by the Team Lead (a CIA case officer), they were responsible for protecting the Annex and its CIA personnel. Such information as the Muslim anger over the YouTube video, the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, and the AQ attack green-light video all would have been critical to their ability to do their job but were not provided to them in a timely manner. Those are intelligence failures specifically for those on the ground in Benghazi and should have been identified as such in the HPSCI report.

- As an additional note, the al-Zawahiri green light video is strong evidence not only that the attack was pre-planned, but organized both locally and with some level of connection to what is often called "AQ Central."

AQ/Terrorist Identities of the Attackers

- On pg. 2, the Executive Summary says that the "*...Committee finds that a mixed group of individuals, including those affiliated with Al-Qa'ida, participated in the attacks....although the Committee finds that that the intelligence was and remains conflicting about the identities, affiliations, and motivations of the attackers*."

- In addition to on-the-ground reports from the Americans under attack at the SMC and Annex who identified the attackers as AQ/Ansar al-Shariah terrorists immediately, by 27 Oct 2012, Associated Press reporters had interviewed neighbors who lived near/around the SMC. The link to this AP story is here: http://bigstory.ap.org/article/libyan-witnesses-recount-organized-benghazi-attack

- This AP report clearly states that eye-witnesses identified attackers as Ansar al-Shariah by the logo on their trucks that set up the road blocks around the SMC prior to the attack. While it may have taken the media a few weeks to gather this information, Benghazi CIA officers should have acquired and reported this information well before that. If they did not, then that too is an intelligence failure.

- Further, however, on pg. 185 of "*13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*" Tanto recalls that a member of the 17 Feb Martyrs Brigade handed him a Blackberry cell phone that had been recovered "outside the front of the villa" [meaning the SMC]. Tanto gave the cell phone to COB 'Bob' after he and other team members returned to the Annex.

- This phone more than likely belonged to one of the attackers. The forensic exploitation of its contents would have been completed with speed and urgency, very likely providing the US Intelligence Community (IC) a great deal of information about the entire network of AQ, Ansar al-Shariah, and AQIM terrorists involved in the mission attack within days, if not hours.

- The CCTV footage of the attack would have provided immediate, streaming evidence of exactly who, how many, how armed and organized attacked the mission that night. A minimum of dozens of people in DoD/Pentagon, Department of State (DoS), IC, and White House would have seen it in live time. The Annex security team was not allowed to view the CCTV footage.

Weapons Shipments to Syria via Turkey

- On pg. 3, the Executive Summary says that *"...the Committee also found no evidence that the CIA conducted unauthorized activities in Benghazi and no evidence that the IC shipped arms to Syria.*"

- Once again, the wording of this report is lawyered up here.

- Per open source reporting from CNN - http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/01/us/syria-rebels-us-aid/ - President Obama signed an Intelligence Finding to authorize clandestine support for Syrian rebels (AQ, MB) by the CIA sometime in early 2012.

- The same CNN report says an earlier Finding was signed in 2011 to authorize CIA support to the Libyan rebels (AQ, MB).

- Such Findings carry a great deal of legal weight and likely trump the US Criminal Code ban on providing material support to terrorism. So even if CIA/DoS/SOCOM were providing arms, funding, intelligence, and other support to AQ, it wasn't, strictly speaking, "unauthorized."

- On the Rogers report statement that there is "*no evidence the IC shipped arms to Syria*", see pg. 87 of the same report, where Mike Morell admits that arms were leaving Benghazi and going to Syria. Although sections are redacted here, the implication is clear that the Turks were involved in that movement of weapons.

- Mike Morell tried to give Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA) (who's asking the questions here) the impression that the only CIA role was monitoring that movement, not participating in it. At this point, HPSCI Chairman Rogers interestingly intervened to shut the conversation down from going any further.

- A 25 Oct 2012 report from FOX's Catherine Herridge revealed that the Libyan-flagged ship 'Al-Entisar', loaded w/weapons destined for Syrian rebels had been docked in the Turkish port of Iskanderun on 6 Sep 2012 - http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/10/25/was-syrian-weapons-shipment-factor-in-ambassadors-benghazi-visit/.

- In the carefully worded style of this report, it might be said that the weapons weren't actually "shipped to Syria" after all – because they went to Turkey first (despite Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's apparent memory lapse on this same question). These differing accounts - one from Morell, one from Secretary Clinton - (especially in light of openly available information) need to be confronted and resolved.

- Lastly, there is information to suggest that the Department of State was in command of the MANPADS collection effort, not the Department of Defense. On pg. 57 of "*13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*" it says that Stevens and the State Department set up the MANPADS collection program in collaboration with the Muslim-Brotherhood-controlled Libyan Transitional National Council (TNC).

House Intelligence Report:
http://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/Benghazi%20Report%20Appendix%204%20pages%2061-91.pdf