

From: Pickens, Amber R
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Subject: US MISSION BENGHAZI EMERGENCY ACTION COMMITTEE - AUGUST 16, 2012

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From: AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
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1. (U) SUMMARY: On August 15, 2012, the U.S. Mission Benghazi Principal Officer (PO) convened the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) to evaluate Post's tripwires in light of the deteriorating security situation in Benghazi. The EAC discussed: (1) the increase in violent incidents in Benghazi, (2) the departure of private and public sector organizations, (3) the rise of potentially anti-western militias, and (4) host nation security capabilities in response to these issues. The EAC resolved to: (1) update and modify the tripwire matrix to include a "suspension of operations" section, (2) [redacted] and DS REACT/EAP plans and conduct cooperative drills, and (3) submit additional equipment/manpower needs to US Embassy Tripoli for review. The EAC was chaired by the PO and attended by RSO, [redacted]

2. (U) DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION: The PO remarked that the security situation in Benghazi was "trending negatively" and post was witnessing a variety of other groups attempting to fill the security vacuum created by the absence of professional security forces under the control of the central government. Some of these groups, to include the police force and Western-friendly militias, have attempted to rein in the violence, while others, such as criminal elements and Islamist militias, are instigating, if not perpetrating, this violence. The PO opined that this daily pattern of violence would be the "new normal" for the foreseeable future, particularly given the minimal capabilities of organizations such as the Supreme Security Council and local police.

3. (U) DEPARTURE OF ORGANIZATIONS FROM BENGHAZI: RSO remarked that various organizations had either recently reduced their staffing levels or left Benghazi due to the security environment, most notably the International Red Cross and a USG contractor (demobilizing prior to contract termination on 9/20). Also, official organizations (United Nations, Government of Qatar) and private businesses (Blue Mountain Libya) that operated out of the Tibesti Hotel have moved to other locations in the city due to a combination of bombings targeting the hotel and protestors taking over the facility. PO stated that while Post has seen some departures from Benghazi, it is important to note that other organizations, such as the British Mission, appear to be returning to Benghazi. Furthermore, some local organizations and human rights groups appear to be increasing their visibility within town, including efforts to oppose the recent violence. A broad range of contacts continue to attach great symbolic and practical importance to a continued USG presence here.

4. (S/NF) INCREASE IN HOSTILE MILITIAS: RAO briefed the EAC on the location of approximately ten Islamist militias and AQ training camps within Benghazi. [redacted]

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

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[redacted] RSO noted that the Benghazi militias have become more brazen in their actions and have little fear of reprisal from the GoL. (RSO note: RSO has mapped the location of the militias to assist in route planning of essential movements.)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

5. (S/NF) HOST NATION SECURITY SUPPORT: RSO and PO expressed concerns with the lack of host nation security support to the US Mission. The SSC no longer provides an armed presence at the mission, and RSO requests to provide a daily police presence have gone unanswered.

[redacted] RSO expressed concerns with Post's relationship with the 17 February Brigade, particularly in light of some of the actions taken by the brigade's subsidiary members.

6. (S/NF) TRIPWIRE REVISIONS: PO will revise Post's tripwires to better reflect current concerns. The Mission will also maintain its heightened security posture, to include restrictions on non-essential movements and careful review of all travel requests. In addition, as Post is staffed solely with mission critical personnel, and cannot draw down further while remaining operational, PO suggested the tripwire matrix include a "suspended operations" option. Under this option, all movements would be curtailed, and Post would conduct business only from the compound. There is precedent for this option; post went to a "suspended operations" posture after the June 2012 attack on the mission.

7. (S/NF)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(c)

8. (U) SECURITY REQUESTS FOR EMBASSY REVIEW: In light of the uncertain security environment, US Mission Benghazi will submit specific requests to US Embassy Tripoli for additional physical security upgrades and staffing needs by separate cover.

9. (U) Point of contact is RSO Jeremy Anderson who can be reached at andersonjp@state.gov, or local cell [redacted]

Signature:

Stevens

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