

"MORGAN JONES'" BLUE MOUNTAIN WHITEWASH

One thing that surprises me about this whole 60 Minutes "Morgan Jones" fiasco is that no one mentions that, regardless of whether "Jones" lied to his supervisor about running to the compound or not, it's clear he lied to his supervisor about Chris Stevens' death. As I noted earlier, the incident report (which the FBI has leaked matches his interview with them) says,

I kept quiet about the Ambassadors [sic] death as I knew there would be huge repercussions.

Assuming "Jones'" company was what it claims to be – a security firm – he had been involved in the worst possible disaster, the death of the principal, and he didn't warn his boss. Even within the scope of the incident report, it's clear he lied.

The ARB version

With all that in mind, I want to compare what the State Department Accountability Review Board said about BMG's performance (they refer to it as Blue Mountain Libya, BML) with the two versions "Jones" has offered.

The ARB admitted that BMG guards were unarmed.

The Special Mission also had an unarmed, contract local guard force (LGF), Blue Mountain Libya (BML), which provided five guards per eight-hour shift, 24/7, to open and close the gates, patrol the compound, and give warning in case of an attack.

But it also found they had failed to fulfill one of their primary duties, perimeter patrols.

The Board found the responses by both

BML and February 17 to be inadequate. No BML guards were present outside the compound immediately before the attack ensued, although perimeter security was one of their responsibilities,

[snip]

Although the unarmed BML guards could not be expected to repel an attack, they had core responsibility for providing early warning and controlling access to the compound, which they had not always performed well in the past.

In addition, ARB raised questions about whether the BMG guards had run away and left the gate open, facilitating the quick assault on the compound.

In the final analysis, the Board could not determine exactly how the C1 gate at the Special Mission compound was breached, but the speed with which attackers entered raised the possibility that BML guards left the C1 pedestrian gate open after initially seeing the attackers and fleeing the vicinity. They had left the gate unlatched before.

Finally, there are conflicting stories about whether the BMG guards even sounded the first alarm – or any alarm – before attackers had already started streaming into the compound.

and there is conflicting information as to whether they sounded any alarms prior to fleeing the C1 gate area to other areas of the SMC.

[snip]

Around the same time, the TDY RSO working in the TOC heard shots and an explosion. He then saw via security camera dozens of individuals, many armed, begin to enter the compound through the main entrance at the C1

gate. He hit the duck and cover alarm and yelled a warning over the radio, and recalled no such warning from the February 17 or BML guards, who had already begun to flee to points south and east in the compound, towards the Villa B area. ARS0s 1 and 2 heard an attack warning from the BML guards passed on over the radio.

About the only contribution BMG made to security for the compound, the ARB reports, was in noticing a man uniformed as a police officer scoping out the compound earlier that morning.

At approximately 0645 local that morning, a BML contract guard saw an unknown individual in a Libyan Supreme Security Council (SSC) police uniform apparently taking photos of the compound villas with a cell phone from the second floor of a building under construction across the street to the north of the SMC. The individual was reportedly stopped by BML guards, denied any wrongdoing, and departed in a police car with two others. This was reported to ARS0s 1 and 2.

Note, the use of “reportedly” here makes it clear ARB did not interview the guards involved.

The incident report version

“Jones,” under the name Dylan Davies, provides a different version on key points in his incident report (which he notes came second-hand from guards who had been at the compound, so he “cannot confirm that all the details are correct”).

According to his version, the two BMG guards at the front gate had sounded the duck-and-cover then run away.

[redacted] informed me that he and [redacted] had been at the front gate at

the time of the attack. They pressed the duck and cover alarm and then escaped unharmed.

Note, according to Davies' narrative, the attack started about 12 minutes earlier than the ARB said it started.

Davies explains the actions of the other guards by saying that one was shot and two others subjected to a mock execution.

Finally, Davies describes one of his supervisor guards calling from the hospital having discovered the dead Ambassador at precisely the moment – 2 AM, per the ARB – that someone called Embassy Tripoli to report his death (using one of the ARSO's phones) and also precisely the moment doctors stopped trying to revive Stevens.

I find it hard to believe this BMG guard would have been able to snap a phone picture of the Ambassador during the period when doctors were busy trying to save his life without being noticed.

The book version

And now writing as "Morgan Jones," he presented another version.

What's interesting about the (now retracted) version presented at Slate is that many of the details seem to derive from the ARB (he admits "I learned the fuller picture of what happened during that fateful night"). Which, I guess, is one way to pretend you witnessed an event you didn't.

The account differs from the ARB primarily as it pertains to his actions or those of his guards.

For example, here's how he describes the beginning of the attack.

Shortly after nightfall 50 gunmen from the Shariah Brigade—a Libyan militia tied to al-Qaida—rushed the Mission, and were able to gain access via the

pedestrian entrance set to one side of the main gate. They did so by threatening the Blue Mountain guards with assault rifles and RPGs. Basically, the guards—who were unarmed and defenseless,*because the State Department contract dictated that they be unarmed and defenseless*—were ordered to open the side gate or else be killed.

The one thing my unarmed guard force did do was raise the alarm—either via their radios or by pressing the duck-and-cover alarm (it remains unclear which occurred). Alerted to an attack, Alex, the lead regional security officer (RSO), could see via the CCTV monitors in the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) what was unfolding.

This solves the discrepancy between his timeline and the ARB by not placing a time on the start of the attack (though events as recounted in the ARB wouldn't provide much flexibility on this point). It provides an excuse both for his guards' flight and for the quick breach of the gate. And it claims that, regardless of which alarm took place first, his guards set off the alarm. The testimony of the RSO, then, is relegated as a response to his guards' alarm, rather than — potentially, according to the ARB — the very first alarm.

"Jones" goes on to repeat his claim that his guards were threatened with execution and one was shot in the knee.

They captured two of my guard force and made them kneel inside the front gate, where they beat them and carried out mock executions. Guns were put to the guards' heads, and triggers pulled on empty chambers—hence initial reports that I heard that my guards had been shot in the head and executed. Having made it clear they were "only here to kill Americans," the attackers shot one

of the guards in both kneecaps before turning to their main task—the hunt.

It's curious he claimed to have heard his guards were executed, given that less than 3 days after the attack, he wasn't making that claim.

His 60 Minutes version covers a different time frame – his invented heroic scaling of the walls – but none of that is placed in time. And of course, none of that shows up in either the incident report or the ARB, since he wasn't really there.

But you see the general point.

"Jones'" account doesn't accord with the incident report or even the ARB (the latter of which 60 Minutes and everyone else could have accessed via a simple Google search). And while the Right Wing Noise Machine has claimed that the ARB is a cover-up, no one has even tried to deal with the serious accusations about BMG's failures that night. That is, even if the ARB is a cover-up, then 60 Minutes should have at least explained why we should trust "Jones" over, in some cases, the testimony of American officers.

It may well be that the men "Morgan Jones" was in charge of hiring and training failed in every way that night – and made it possible for the attackers to rush into the compound. And at the very least, "Jones'" story differs even in the matter most central to his role in Ambassador Stevens' death. Yet none of that has appeared in the reporting on it.