

# TIME TO FUND STATE LIKE WE FUND DOD

Two more updates in the continuing effort to make Benghazi into Obama's Jimmy Carter.

Jake Tapper offers up an email showing the State Department's Under Secretary for Management denying a request on May 3 that the Libyan Security Support Team continue to have access to a Department DC-3.

The U.S. government official who provided the email to ABC News – and wanted to remain anonymous because of the sensitivity of the matter – described the small DC-3 plane as an asset for a security team to more freely and safely move throughout the country, and to more easily transport arms and other security equipment. In short, having the plane allowed the security team to better perform its duties, the official said.

The State Department official acknowledged that the plane was used to get around Libya, not just to get in and out of the country. But once commercial air service was re-established, the State Department decided that the SST didn't need the plane anymore. The security team, it would seem, disagreed.

At one level, plane transportation was an issue the night of the attack. As the WSJ described last month, an American security team appears to have **gotten to** Benghazi in time to help repel the most aggressive attack against the annex. But when all the Americans were taken to the airport for transport to Tripoli, they didn't fit on that plane.

A plane with an American security team from Tripoli arrived in Benghazi about 1:30 a.m., according to the Libyan

account. The team found its way to the annex using global positioning devices. Libyans who accompanied the Americans to the scene weren't told of the annex's location because of its connection to sensitive programs, and the Americans didn't give them the GPS coordinates or address. Libyans at an emergency operation center in Benghazi were also kept in the dark to the exact location.

As the U.S. and Libyan reinforcement team arrived from the airport, fighting broke out at the annex.

That assault, using rocket-propelled grenades and mortars, was described in U.S. and Libyan accounts as more sophisticated than the earlier attack on the consulate, and it appeared to involve militants with possible links to al Qaeda.

The Libyans led a convoy of roughly 30 Americans from the safe house to the airport, where a plane had been waiting. But they quickly realized the plane was too small to evacuate everyone at once.

"We were surprised at the numbers of Americans who were at the airport," said Libyan Deputy Prime Minister Mustafa Abushagour. "We figured three or four people. No one told us the numbers ahead of time."

The issue here, however, appears to stem from US efforts to keep their spooks off the books, not from any lack of transport itself. (Depending on configuration, a DC-3 might or might not have been big enough for all the unanticipated Americans.)

Furthermore, this issue seems to be more about the relative outfitting of State and DOD, a problem that has been well known to lay people since Dana Priest wrote in the Mission in 2003. Sure Special Forces teams are going to want more

equipment. They're used to it. But State has far less equipment than DOD. It may or may not have been the appropriate decision, but it is a decision that stems in part from the funding sources Congress—people like Paul Ryan—approve.

I'm far more interested in the other new development, the WaPo's report that the Libyan inclusion of a second militia, in addition to the more trusted February 17th Brigade, for Quick Reaction Force response.

A soot-soaked copy of a memorandum found in the looted security office shows that as late as Sept. 9, American security officials were working to "clarify the work requirements and expectations" of the 17th February Martyrs Brigade, the militia that had been tasked with securing the Americans since they established the mission in 2011.

The document, cast as a request, specified that in case of an attack the guards "will request additional support" from their militia's nearby base. The guards did so during the Sept. 11 attack, according to Libyan security officials, guards who were present from the beginning and other members of the 17th February militia who were summoned within minutes.

But a second militia, Rafallah al-Sehati, that had not previously been involved in guarding the Americans, was also asked to provide assistance that night, a spokesman for the militia said. The group has been backed by the Libyan government and provides security in Benghazi, which has a minimally developed police force. But one of its leaders has described himself as a "jihadist," and Rafallah al-Sehati officials said that weapons capable of taking down airplanes were stolen when their compound was overrun by protesters last month.

Jamal Aboshala, a spokesman for Rafallah al-Sehati, said the request came at 3 a.m. local time from Fawzi Bukhatif, the commander of the 17th February militia. He said that American officials had initially declined an offer of help, and were later reluctant to share with militia members the precise location of an annex to which they had retreated.

Now, I'm interested in this for two slightly different reasons than the WaPo, which sees this as the contingency plan—which they admit was being actively discussed in the days before the attack—going awry. It appears, rather, to reflect the changing nature of the security plan, not the failure to adhere to a fixed plan.

But I do think the involvement of the Rafallah al-Sehati to be noteworthy. After all, the annex location was compromised. So we know the Americans were hesitant to share the annex location with Rafallah al-Sehati, and we know that someone compromised the location. (It's likely, too, that solely the unexpected nature of the attack—a multi-prong assault rather than an IED—necessitated the call for more militia.)

Also, note the comment WaPo included in Wednesday's article from a Rafallah al-Sehati figure.

"We don't have institutions," said Col. Salah bin Omran, the newly appointed military head of Rafallah al-Sahati, a government-backed militia that is one of the main groups providing security in Benghazi. "The security for normal people is fine. But I don't know. If the Americans come, I'm not sure they'll be completely safe."

The comment bugged me when I reviewed all the ways security was used as an excuse to cover Libyan stalling on cooperation in the attack. And I find it more interesting now, particularly

since Benghazi locals are saying the Americans were wrong not to trust Rafallah al-Sahati.

Within days before the Libyan government approved the US trip to Benghazi—pointedly carried out without relying on militias for security—the military head of the militia State found itself unexpectedly relying on was questioning whether it could keep Americans safe.