

DARRELL ISSA EXPOSES THE CIA AS A FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE STUNT

Darrell Issa just released a bunch of documents so as to seed the Sunday shows in time for Monday's foreign policy debate. [Update: See Josh Rogin's reported description of some of the sensitivities Issa exposed.]

Here's a running explication of what he released, all in the name of "national security."

PDF 1: In December, Jeffrey Feltman asked Patrick Kennedy to approve "a combined footprint of 35 U.S. government personnel in Benghazi." That would include 10 people identified as State: 8 State Department and USAID, and 2 temporary duty personnel.

Which leaves 25 people unaccounted for.

As it happens, the Libyans say there were 29 people they hadn't expected when they came to evacuate the Americans. They complained afterwards that the Americans hadn't told them about all the spooks they'd have onsite.

Well, now, Issa just confirmed they were not State or even USAID personnel. He has confirmed the Libyans' claims—that they were spooks.

And then there's this:

Because of budget considerations and the reduced footprint, Diplomatic Security's current presence consists of two Special Agents...

As far back as December 2011, budget considerations were driving the small security footprint in Benghazi.

The budget considerations put into place by the GOP cuts to State's budget.

PDF 14: As of February 1, 2012, the sole terrorist group Eric Nordstrom expressed concern about was LIFG, whom we partnered with to overthrow Qaddafi.

PDF 17: Blue Mountain Group, the British security firm that had provided the unarmed Libyans at the mission, was one of just 7 firms approved by the Libyan government.

PDF 23: This is an annual crime survey, filled out in February. Though it describes a lot of crime—committed by criminals who are indistinguishable from the militia—it does say diplomats and expats can avoid crime—including murder—by avoiding being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Though note PDF 117, which says by July the likelihood of an “isolating incident” is high.

PDF 27: On December 29, 2011: Someone burgled a 100-KG safe from the International Democratic Institute. This was before—but by just a matter of weeks—the detention of employees (including Ray LaHood’s son) of similar NGOs in Egypt.

PDF 45: The “Imprisoned Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman Brigade” took credit for the May attack on the ICRC and the June attack on the US mission, suggesting ties to Egypt. Cf PDFs 107, 110.

PDF 47: One of the reasons Tripoli (not Benghazi) needed more security is because there were so many VIP visits. Of course, as part of this witch hunt, Jason Chaffetz did a short-notice trip to Tripoli (he did not travel to Benghazi, which raises questions about the value of his trip). So this witch hunt, in addition to being led by people who cut Diplomatic Security, creating the budgetary stresses underlying this, also added to the stresses of VIP visits.

PDF 55: The discussion of a women’s rights activists’ conversations with diplomatic personnel is one of the conversations Issa should have redacted.

PDF 56: Compare the redaction on the “from” line here with that on the same document released as

Issa released it during the hearing. So these are either a different document set or Issa has been redacting things that hurt his argument. My posts on this cable are here and here.

PDF 89: Two female mission personnel from Benghazi were stopped at a roadblock. Given what we know about the staff at the mission, it appears likely these weren't State employees.

PDF 96: One thing that the lists of previous security incidents make clear is that the February 17 Brigade—on whom the US mission relied for security—were doing their job. They appear to have responded in timely fashion to all the earlier incidents (though were not able to bring culprits to justice). That raises questions why another militia, the Rafallah al-Sehati Brigade, was brought in the night of the attack on the mission.

PDF 97: Note the protest against the Arabian Gulf Oil Company. Ambassador Chris Stevens had multiple meetings with the company the week of the attack, and there were reports that records involving oil contracts were taken from the mission.

PDF 99-100: I had wondered why the detention of two South African contractors were included in Darrell Issa's list of attacks on "western" targets. It turns out they were involved in the US-funded weapons abatement program.

PDF 102: Issa presumably counted each of these security incidents when giving the big numbers showing poor security in Libya. As was noted in the hearing, the majority of these incidents actually happened in Tripoli, not in Benghazi. But there's another problem: they were also counting things like strikes by workers or clashes with drug gangs. Using Issa's standards, then, we need military security in the US.

PDF 102: Note that a bank robbery in Benghazi was carried out by the unnamed brigade paid to guard the bank.

PDF 117: In the July summary of security

incidents, the report says the likelihood of an American encountering an “isolating incident” is high.

PDF 119: In a discussion of a Sharia law conference, someone—it’s in English but it’s not clear whether it’s meant to be a translation—says:

Things are becoming clearer day by day in eastern Libya. groups and brigades are polarizing along Islamists-jihadists-secularist lines.

US drones are not only hovering all the time over eastern Libya, they also bombed a training camp run by Abdulbasit Azuz, a commander from Derna.

Yes, you heard that right, US drones are bombing Libya already.

The following pages include video from the meeting and an Arabic text describing which brigades were involved. I’m guessing the Arabic will include some of the brigades involved in the attack.