The CIA Global Response Contractors’ Public Response to the November 21, 2014 House Intelligence Committee Report about the September 11 and 12, 2012 Benghazi Attacks

Michael Roger’s House Intelligence Report is ‘Full Of Inaccuracies’

BY JOHN ‘TIG’ TIEGAN and KRS ‘TANTO’ PARONTO, CIA Contractors on the Ground in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012

Since the release of the November 21, 2014 U.S. House Intelligence Committee’s report, many uninformed people in the political world including several national media outlets want to believe that this reports “debunks” what really happened in Benghazi. The report, however, is full of inaccuracies—and the authors of the report printed them anyway despite testimony and other truthful information that proved those statements wrong.

Testimony was provided by the Global Response Staff, security contractors on the ground working for the CIA in Benghazi on, September 11, 2012 to September 12, 2012. These CIA contractors debunked these conclusions. The team of CIA security contractors consisted of Kris “Tanto” Paronto, John “Tig” Tiegen, Mark “Oz” Geist, Ty “Rone” Woods (now deceased), Jack Silva and DB Benton - all sources of the book, 13 Hours, which is a first-hand account of what happened at both Benghazi locations during the attacks on September 11, 2012.

We provided the same unchanging and accurate information of what took place in Benghazi on September 11, 2012 through September 12, 2012 to our immediate chain of command in the CIA's office of security, during several FBI interviews, and to Congressman Rogers and his committee. So it comes as a very big disappointment to us as those on the front lines that this report is full of inaccuracies and bias.

We can only assume that this is the case because Rogers and others are attempting to protect their reputations, and protect, or further the careers of others, but that should be left for another time. The purpose of this article that we are writing as former CIA Global Response Staff security contractors, who fought and bled together that night in Benghazi, Libya, is to point out the major inaccuracies in this faux “investigative” report.

We are standing up and speaking out to set the record straight yet once again because some in Congress and in the mainstream media refuse to accept the facts about what happened to us as witnesses, combatants, and survivors of the Benghazi attacks on September 11, 2012 and September 12, 2012.

If one wants to separate facts from biased political beliefs then one needs to get their facts correct. The report Congressman Rogers and his Democratic committee's ranking member Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger completed got several facts wrong about the basic timeline of events that took place on the ground in Benghazi. So, if this “official” report cannot get its facts correct, it cannot be deemed the “final” investigative report by the
mainstream media. We, as the men who protected other Americans on the ground in
Benghazi, as best we could, are here to point out specifically what this HIPSC report and
Mike Rogers got wrong. What follows is a detailed breakdown of some of the inaccuracies
in Rogers’ report.

FALSE FINDING #1:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 8, paragraph 2 of the US House of Representative Intelligence Report states:

“Security Officers from the CIA's Benghazi Annex recalled hearing explosions from an
unknown location around 9:40 p.m.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:

This is incorrect. As we and others stated during our testimony before the House of
Representatives’ Committee (date), we were first contacted at 9:32 p.m. and the explosions
and gunfire were known to be at what was known to us as the U.S. consulate, which per
security requirements after the attack, was changed to the U.S. Special Mission and was
then called the “Temporary Mission Facility” by U.S. Department of State, and later in this
report. Note that the location of all gunfire and explosions were known to those of us at the
U.S. Annex. At no time did we state to the committee that we did not know the location of
the gunfire or explosions. We had visited what we knew to be the U.S. Consulate on a
weekly basis.

FALSE FINDING #2:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 8, paragraph 1 of the U.S. House of Representative Intelligence Report states:

“Due to the thick smoke, the DS agent lost contact with Ambassador Stevens and Mr. Smith
along the escape route. After crawling out the window and realizing the Ambassador and
Mr. Smith were not with him, the DS Agent. under gunfire, repeatedly re-entered the
burning building to search for them, but was unsuccessful.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:

This is extremely unlikely. Ansar Al Sharia and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)
terrorists had taken complete control of the U.S. compound in Benghazi, and had one of the
villas there completely surrounded and were within only feet of each window and door
opening. If the Diplomatic Security (DS) agent repeatedly went in and out of the window
under gunfire how was he not hit? The terrorists would have been no more than 10 feet
from him shooting into an area that was 4 feet wide by 8 feet long with no cover. The DS
agent may have been able to complete this move once, but doing so repeatedly would have
been impossible without injury or death. Also, Rogers’ report makes no reference that the DS agents individually testified to Mike Rogers and the committee. We, CIA Contractors on the ground, have remained close friends with one of the DS agents, and he stated to us that he was never asked to testify before Mike Rogers’s House Intelligence Committee. How can the report be deemed a complete investigation when the members don’t speak to all who were on the ground and in combat?

Former Deputy CIA Director Mike Morrell, Mike Rogers and James Clapper were not in Libya during the attack, nor were any member of House Intelligence Committee. CIA Chief of Station and CIA Chief of Base “Bob” did not assist us (the GRS Security Team- the CIA Contractors) at the Temporary Mission Facility. The CIA Team Leader also waited at the vehicles 400 meters from the Temporary Mission Facility allowing all 6 GRS CIA Security Contractors to clear and secure it before driving our SUV onto the Temporary Mission Facility. What we’re getting at here is this statement in the report is taken from those who did not physically see or experience what took place during the initial attack and subsequent GRS response early on at the Temporary Mission Facility.

False Finding #3:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 9, Paragraph 4/Page 10, Paragraph 1 states: “Within approximately one hour, at about 12:30 AM, the attackers began one of several attempts to assault the Annex. Some of this attack was captured on video. CIA personnel recounted that the attacks included RPG’s, satchel charges, gelatin explosives, and small arms fire, with around five to ten people amassing in the adjacent field. These security personnel were able to repel the attackers. Around 2:00 to 2:30 AM, there was a second attempt on the compound that lasted 5 to 10 minutes that was also repelled.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:

This portion of the report significantly downplays the ferocity of the multiple attacks on the Annex. The second attack involved closer to 20 or more terrorists and was much longer and more aggressive than the first. We have stated this on many occasions to all that have interviewed us including Mike Rogers and his committee. It should also be noted emphatically that the GRS security contractors—the Kris “Tanto” Paronto, John “Tig” Tiegen, Mark “Oz” Geist, Jack Silva, and DB Benton—were the only CIA personnel who saw the attackers from start to finish, and we were the only CIA personnel who were involved in both firefights.

Both the Benghazi Chief of Base and CIA GRS Team Leader hid in Building C during both attacks and the following mortar attack. Neither the Chief of Base “Bob” or the GRS Team Leader came up to the Annex Roofs or fighting positions to see what was going on outside the Annex walls. Any testimony outside that coming from the GRS Security Contractors holds limited value since no one except the GRS Security Contractors saw or was involved with both attacks in their entirety.
False Finding #4:

**POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:**

—Page 11, Paragraph 4 reads: “Meanwhile, the other Tripoli Teams officers spread out to assess the situation, locate all personnel and fill any security gaps.”

**FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:**

This is entirely incorrect. Once the Tripoli element—GRS and Delta Force arrived, all of them entered and stayed in Building C until approximately 5 minutes after the end of the mortar attacks that killed Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods. Those attacks also severely injured Mark “Oz” Geist and Dave Ubben. The only member of the Tripoli element that joined the Benghazi GRS security team upon arrival was Doherty. He climbed to the roof of Building C. Mike Rogers and his committee were told this in testimony from us. Further, Paronto stated he called on the radio to the Tripoli element asking for relief in order to use the bathroom immediately after they arrived. The request was never answered by any CIA personnel in Building C or by the Tripoli element.

False Finding #5:

**POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:**

Page 12, Paragraph 1 reads: “Following the mortar fire, the remaining members of the security team rescued and began treating the wounded officers while repelling attackers who continued to fire on the Annex for a short time.”

**FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:**

This is also incorrect. Once the final mortar fell, the Libyan Militia, who brought the Tripoli team from Benina Airfield, went in the direction of the mortar fire as ordered by their commander who was trapped in Building C. Tiegen was the only one who went to Building C immediately to assist the wounded. Paronto, Jack Silva, and DB Benton were the only GRS security contractors who remained outside to defend the Annex. Tiegen was never under fire when he went up the ladder, or the whole time he was on the roof treating the four down Americans. It took the Tripoli Team and Delta Force several minutes before coming out of Building C to assist Tiegen in helping the severely wounded and to reinforce the defensive positions of Paronto, Silva and Benton.

False Finding #6:

**POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:**

Page 16, Paragraph 2 states: “At the Annex, only one DS agent participated in the defense of the Annex, but he was in a defensive position on the roof of the Annex building #3 when it
was hit with the mortar rounds and was severely injured. The other DS agents remained in a secure area with the CIA case officers and support staff.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:

SHOULD THIS READ THEY WERE IN DEFENSIVE POSITIONS?
Again, this is incorrect. We did not state to Mike Rogers and his committee that three DS agents were located at defensive positions with one on Building B, one on Building C, and one on Building D. We all were in defensive positions; we’re not sure why the Rogers report focused on how this DS agent was the only one in a defensive position.

False Finding #7:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 19, Paragraph 3 reads: “Specifically, upon receiving the first call of an attack from an assistant Regional Security Officer at 9:42 p.m., the Annex security team leader gathered the five other available security officers that were at the Annex, and he told them what he knew.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:

Wrong. The first call to the GRS team in Benghazi to muster due to the attack on the Temporary Mission Facility was at 9:32 p.m. This was stated to Mike Rogers and his committee.

False Finding #8:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 20, Paragraph 1 reads: “The CIA security team chief (GRS Staff Team Leader) in Benghazi, in consultation with the Chief of Base, made the decision to organize the rescue mission and to commence the operation.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:

This is incorrect. The chief of base “Bob” and GRS Staff Team Leader never commenced the rescue operation to save the State Department personnel. Further, the GRS contract security team disobeyed orders to “wait” and “stand down” taking it upon themselves to depart the Annex and come to the aid of the DS agents.

It’s also important to note that Paronto was antagonized by a committee staff member while Mike Rogers and his fellow congressmen were in session. The young committee staff member asked Paronto about his military background and went on to continually ask for several minutes if it was normal for Rangers to disobey direct orders since it was not proper to disobey orders when he, the staff member, served in the Navy. If the Chief of
Base “Bob” and GRS Staff Team Leader commenced the rescue operation immediately, the exchange between Paronto and that committee staff member would never have occurred.

**False Finding #9:**

**POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:**

Page 20, Paragraph 2 reads: “Although some security officers voiced a greater urgency to depart for the TMF, no officer at the CIA was ever told to stand down. The evidence from eyewitness testimony, ISR video footage, closed-circuit television recordings and other sources provides no support for the allegation that there was any stand-down order.”

**FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:**

This statement is grossly incorrect. Paronto stated to Mike Rogers and his committee, looking Rogers directly in the eye, that he was delayed and was told to wait twice. Paronto also stated to Mike Rogers and his committee that the “27” minute delay and his team waiting was a severe military tactical mistake made by leadership figures who had little to no military training or experience in combat operations, and the delay cost the lives of Ambassador Stevens and Sean Smith due to them dying from smoke inhalation—something that takes time.

It should also be noted that the exact words “STAND DOWN” were used by the Chief of Base “Bob” to Tiegen approximately 15 minutes after the initial “help” call from the DS agents on the radio at the facility under attack. Tiegen did not testify with his fellow teammates, Kris “Tanto” Paronto, Mark “Oz” Geist or Jack Silva. Tiegen testified alongside the CIA GRS staff team leader. This was a tactical maneuver by the Committee and the CIA since Tiegen was still employed by the CIA and scheduled to deploy shortly thereafter. This put immense pressure on Tiegen to testify in line with the CIA and Mike Rogers “cover up” agenda. It should be noted as well that Tiegen was not asked by Mike Rogers or the committee if he was told to “stand down” during his testimony. That question was directed, by the committee, to the GRS staff team leader only.

The video footage from the Annex show the GRS security contractors getting in and out of their vehicles and approaching the CIA Chief of Base “Bob” and GRS Staff Team Leader several times within the 27 minutes delay. This was due to the GRS security contractors continually requesting to “Bob” and Team Leader to leave the Annex to save the lives of the DS agents who were under attack and burning.

It is also important to note that the excuse for the delay by the CIA Base Chief “Bob” and GRS staff Team Leader was their ALLEGED effort to gather intelligence of the situation and obtain gun trucks with heavier weapons to assist in the rescue operation. Neither of these “excuses” by “Bob” or the Team Leader was realized once the GRS security contractors left the Annex without orders. The GRS security contractors still went in to the rescue, 27 minutes after the first DS request for help, without any new intelligence or information and without gun trucks or heavy weapons.
The delay departing the Annex allowed Ansar Al Sharia to reinforce the avenues of approach to the Temporary Mission Facility with AK-47s and RPG’s. This caused the GRS security contractors to dismount their vehicles to suppress enemy fire and tactically move the remaining 350-400 meters, approximately, on foot over several 8-foot concrete walls and backyards through “dead space” adding an additional 20 minute delay to the 27 minutes delay from the Annex.

False Finding #9:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 20, Paragraph 3 reads: “The 21 minute period between the time the Annex personnel first learned of the attack and when they departed reflects the time the Team needed to put on gear and the time during which the Chief of Base in Benghazi tried to secure local militias to assist in the mission.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:

This is also incorrect because, as stated to the Mike Rogers and the committee by the GRS security contractors, it was at a minimum of a 27 minute delay.

False Finding #10:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 21, Paragraph 1 states: “He (Deputy Director Morrell) also said: ’It has occurred to me that the Benghazi senior intelligence official sent them the moment they were ready to at that 15 minute mark.’”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:

This is false. Regarding Deputy Director Morrell, this inaccurate testimony shows that he is unclear of what happened on the ground in Benghazi 09/11/2012 to 09/12/2012 and that he failed to speak to the GRS security contractors, purposely or by accident, after the attack. This also shows a greater reliance on the CIA staff testimony, the majority of which is incorrect, rather than the GRS security contractors who were on the ground that night.

False Finding #11:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 21, Paragraph 2 reads: “Testimony from an Active CIA official who has personal experience in crisis situations provided a detailed validation of Morrell’s assessment.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:
Since when does an outside source that was neither involved with the fighting in Benghazi or decisions made that night into the following morning, good or bad, play a vital role in a House Intelligence Committee’s report? Then CIA Deputy Director Mike Morrell has no on the ground combat experience so his assessment is a guess at best based upon reading Intel cables, seeing video footage or talking in offices with those physically carrying out the combat operations. This entire section should have played no part in Mike Rogers and the committee’s report.

Another point worth making is that the GRS security contractors on the ground did have actual combat experience in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan theaters, and had been through multiple crises and combat situations. We represented all branches of service, specifically the Army’s 75th Ranger Regiment, the Navy Seals and the Marine Corps’ Recon and Infantry. We were non-commissioned and commissioned officers as well.

There is also one more important fact: We were all on the ground fighting, trying to save lives and dying. We knew the continually changing situation and based all of our decisions on the “flow” of battle. We knew that minutes were costing lives where analysts and politicians sitting in D.C, all with little to no combat experience, did not. As such, to claim that Morrell’s response was “validated” by an “active, senior CIA official” is incorrect. When combat starts, as it did that night in Benghazi, you have a few minutes to make decisions, and then you have to trust in your training and trust the man next to you. CIA analysts, particularly Morrell, obviously, do not understand this.

Therefore we knew the repercussions of leaving the base to aid the DS agents, but to say the Annex was left unprotected is entirely and completely inaccurate. The Annex had two Base Security Personnel with the primary responsibility of protecting the Annex from physical attack. Mark “Oz” Geist and one Case Officer with combat experience in Iraq were on site at the Annex. Also, all other CIA staff members at the Annex (approximately 20) were weapons qualified and knew how to operate their respective rifle and pistol weapons systems although none of them came up to the roofs during the attack on the Annex.

False Finding #12:

POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:

Page 23 Paragraph 3 states: “A member of the security team who served in Tripoli four months earlier had inquired about the availability of air assets and believed a Specter gunship was based and available in Sigonella, Italy. He assumed that it was still available that night, though he admitted that is was not his job to know whether it was available. Those officers who attended the emergency action committee meetings had discussed intimately what if any, US military resources were in the area. Those officers knew exactly what was and were not in the area and they understood there was not air support or any other assets in the general area.”

FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:
This was either an intelligence failure or a misrepresentation of the facts. Paronto asked for an ISR (Drone) and an AC-130 Specter Gunship at 9:37 p.m, again at approximately 12:00 a.m., and again at approximately 2:30 a.m. He did so via his personal ICOM radio, something that the entire Annex personnel team uses. He was told by the GRS staff team leader and GRS deputy Chief of Base over the ICOM radio system that they were “working on obtaining both.” Paronto received no response at 2:30 a.m. from his base leadership. At no time did the Annex leadership state over the ICOM radio system that the Specter gunship or air assets were unavailable. This was told to Mike Rogers and his committee by the GRS security contractors.

What is unclear is who “those officers” were in Mike Rogers and the Committee’s report and why this crucial information was not passed on to the GRS Security Team in Benghazi. If what those anonymous “officers” told the committee is true—and the way their testimony was represented in this report was accurate—then that would be an intelligence failure. It’s unheard of for such crucial information to be withheld from a security team. But, given Rogers’ and his committee’s other inaccuracies throughout this report, it wouldn’t surprise us in the least if this section is entirely wrong—either misleading testimony from those “officers” or misrepresentation of their testimony by the committee. It was never communicated to us that we had no backup if attacked in Benghazi.

Another important note is that the 31st Fighter Wing consisting of the 555th and 510th Fighter Squadron located in Aviano Air Base is within range of Benghazi and could refuel in Sigonella Naval Air Station of Souda Bay Greece. Souda Bay Naval Base also supports F15/16s. Sigonella also supported a Marine FAST Company which was not used to assist the GRS security contractors on 09/11/2012 to 09/12/2012. It’s possible to verify the above by examining the Global Command and Control System (GCCS). This system shows where all US assets are in the world from Major – Commands to Individual – C130 Specter Gunship. We do not believe this was examined by Mike Rogers or his committee based upon the references shown at the bottom of each page of this report. This system in classified, but portions can be declassified or examined by those with the proper clearance in order to verify US assets location on 09/11/2012 to 09/12/2012.

**False Finding #13:**

**POLITICIANS in WASHINGTON, D.C. CLAIM:**

Page 31, Paragraph 6: “CIA did not intimidate or prevent any officer from speaking to Congress or otherwise telling his story.”

**FROM THE CIA CONTRACTORS on the GROUND:**

This is incorrect as Paronto knows specifically of a CIA employee that was poorly treated while in Tripoli due to disagreeing with the story that was being fabricated by the CIA
Benghazi Base Chief “Bob,” CIA Station Chief and GRS Team Leader, who were briefing CIA Director Petraeus. The CIA employee also filed a complaint with the CIA Inspector General which either was never investigated or dismissed due to the fact it contradicted the fabricated report.

All GRS security contractors’ were asked to sign multiple non-disclosure agreements after the event as well. This is important since a contractor will not be allowed deploy without signing non-disclosures put in front of them prior to a deployment. At the time GRS contractors were given little time to review the non-disclosure agreement and were not allowed to have an attorney of their choice review the non-disclosure agreement to ensure its fairness for both the contractors and the government.

Per Mike Rogers and the committee’s central issue of there being no intelligence failures prior to the 09/11/2012 – 09/12/2012 attack we’d like to advise the committee to read page 51 of 13 Hours, The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi.

This was taken from a “BOLO” (be on the lookout) report provided the GRS Security Team by the CIA staff approximately 2 weeks prior to the 09/11/2012 attack on the TMF

"Be advised, we have reports from locals that a Western facility or US Embassy/Consulate/Government target will be attacked in the next week...As a precaution, the operators moved their body armor, long guns, ammunition, night-vision goggles, and other tactical gear into their bedrooms, so they could more quickly "jock up," as they called preparing for battle. Discussions had been under way for some time about "co-locating" the Compound and the Annex on the same property, so Bob the Annex chief suggested a trial run. He urged the Diplomatic Security team to move to the Annex during the ambassador’s visit, for added layers of protection. The offer was declined..."

The GRS security contractor’s consistent testimony and book, 13 Hours, The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi, written by Mitchell Zuckoff are the factual accounts of what took place on the ground in Benghazi on 09/11/2012 to 09/12/2012. Over the past two years, the mainstream media generally, have not once pointed out the heroism displayed by the GRS security contractors over 13 hours of hell even though it was stated several times in Mike Rogers and his committee’s report.

However, they are quick to jump on a false and misguided report, written by those who have may have a conflict of interest, something to lose, an agenda to protect, or a President and Secretary of State to absolve, by calling us liars.

It’s okay though. We have continually attempted to take the “high road” and not delve into the political weeds, until we were once again called liars by the same government we had sworn to protect. We never did what we did that night into the following morning to support agendas, political parties or presidencies. We did what we did that night to save
the lives of fellow Americans and defend American soil. We disobeyed orders and went to help the DS agents and our friends because they were under attack by terrorists and were on the brink of death. Now it’s our turn once again to set the record straight, show integrity and tell the truth. It’s a pity though that the truth is something that’s not very popular in today’s society.