

U.S. Efforts to Arm Jihadis in Syria: The Scandal Behind the Benghazi Undercover CIA Facility

Beyond Partisan Politics: Pulitzer-Prize Winning Reporter Sy Hersh Says Benghazi Is A Huge Scandal ... But Not For The Reason You Think

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Pulitzer-prize winning investigative reporter Seymour Hersh – who broke the stories of the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam and the Iraq prison torture scandals, which rightfully disgraced the Nixon and Bush administrations' war-fighting tactics – [reported](#) last week:

In January, the Senate Intelligence Committee released a report on the assault by a local militia in September 2012 on the American consulate and a nearby undercover CIA facility in Benghazi, which resulted in the death of the US ambassador, Christopher Stevens, and three others. The report's criticism of the State Department for not providing adequate security at the consulate, and of the intelligence community for not alerting the US military to the presence of a CIA outpost in the area, received front-page coverage and revived animosities in Washington, with Republicans accusing Obama and Hillary Clinton of a cover-up.

That's the part you've heard about: [failure to protect](#) the personnel at the embassy.

But then Hersh breaks the deeper story wide open:

A highly classified annex to the report, not made public, described a **secret agreement reached in early 2012 between the Obama and Erdoğan administrations**. It pertained to the rat line. By the terms of the agreement, funding came from Turkey, as well as Saudi Arabia and Qatar; **the CIA, with the support of MI6, was responsible for getting arms from Gaddafi's arsenals into Syria**. A number of front companies were set up in Libya, some under the cover of Australian entities. Retired American soldiers, who didn't always know who was really employing them, were hired to manage procurement and shipping. The operation was run by David Petraeus, the CIA director who would soon resign when it became known he was having an affair with his biographer. (A spokesperson for Petraeus denied the operation ever took place.)

The operation had not been disclosed at the time it was set up to the congressional intelligence committees and the congressional leadership, as required by law since the 1970s. The involvement of MI6 enabled the CIA to evade the law by classifying the mission as a liaison operation. The former intelligence official explained that for years there has been a recognised exception in the law that permits the CIA not to report liaison activity to Congress, which would otherwise be owed a finding. (All proposed CIA covert operations must be described in a written document,

known as a 'finding', submitted to the senior leadership of Congress for approval.) Distribution of the annex was limited to the staff aides who wrote the report and to the eight ranking members of Congress – the Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate, and the Democratic and Republican leaders on the House and Senate intelligence committees. This hardly constituted a genuine attempt at oversight: the eight leaders are not known to gather together to raise questions or discuss the secret information they receive.

The annex didn't tell the whole story of what happened in Benghazi before the attack, nor did it explain why the American consulate was attacked. **'The consulate's only mission was to provide cover for the moving of arms,' the former intelligence official, who has read the annex, said. 'It had no real political role.'**

Hersh isn't the first to report on this major scandal.

We've extensively documented that the bigger story behind the murder of ambassador Chris Stevens at the Benghazi embassy in Libya is that [the embassy was the center of U.S. efforts to arm jihadis in Syria who are trying to topple the Syrian government.](#)

We've also noted that this is not a partisan issue ... [both parties](#) greenlighted regime change in Syria years ago, and [both parties](#) have tried to cover up what was really going on in Benghazi.

Last August, CNN [touched on](#) the weapons smuggling aspect of Benghazi.

The [Wall Street Journal](#), [Telegraph](#) and other sources confirm that the US consulate in Benghazi *was mainly being used* for a secret CIA operation.

They say that the State Department presence in Benghazi ["provided diplomatic cover"](#) for the previously hidden CIA mission. WND alleges that it was [not a real consulate](#). And former CIA officer Philip Giraldi [confirms](#):

Benghazi has been described as a U.S. consulate, but it was not. It was an information office that had no diplomatic status. There was a small staff of actual State Department information officers plus local translators. The much larger CIA base was located in a separate building a mile away. It was protected by a not completely reliable local militia. Base management would have no say in the movement of the ambassador and would not be party to his plans, nor would it clear its own operations with the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli. In Benghazi, the CIA's operating directive would have been focused on two objectives: monitoring the local al-Qaeda affiliate group, Ansar al-Sharia, and tracking down weapons liberated from Colonel Gaddafi's arsenal. Staff consisted of CIA paramilitaries who were working in cooperation with the local militia. The ambassador would not be privy to operational details and would only know in general what the agency was up to. When the ambassador's party was attacked, the paramilitaries at the CIA base came to the rescue before being driven back into their own compound, where two officers were subsequently killed in a mortar attack.

Reuters notes that the CIA mission [involved finding and repurchasing heavy weaponry looted from Libyan government arsenals.](#)

Retired Lt. General William Boykin [said](#) in January that Stevens was in Benghazi as part of an

effort to arm the Syrian opposition:

More supposition was that he was now funneling guns to the rebel forces in Syria, using essentially the Turks to facilitate that. Was that occurring, (a), and if so, was it a legal covert action?

Boykin said Stevens was “given a directive to support the Syrian rebels” and the State Department’s Special Mission Compound in Benghazi “would be the hub of that activity.”

Business Insider [reports](#) that Stevens may have been linked with Syrian terrorists:

There’s growing evidence that U.S. agents—particularly murdered ambassador Chris Stevens—were at least aware of heavy weapons moving from Libya to jihadist Syrian rebels.

In March 2011 Stevens [became](#) the official U.S. liaison to the [al-Qaeda-linked](#) Libyan opposition, working directly with Abdelhakim Belhadj of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group—a group that has now disbanded, with some fighters [reportedly](#) participating in the attack that took Stevens’ life.

In November 2011 [The Telegraph](#) reported that Belhadj, acting as head of the Tripoli Military Council, “met with Free Syrian Army [FSA] leaders in Istanbul and on the border with Turkey” in an effort by the new Libyan government to provide money and weapons to the growing insurgency in Syria.

Last month [The Times of London reported](#) that a Libyan ship “carrying the largest consignment of weapons for Syria ... has docked in Turkey.” The shipment reportedly weighed 400 tons and included [SA-7](#) surface-to-air anti-craft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades.

[Reuters reports](#) that Syrian rebels have been using those heavy weapons to [shoot down](#) Syrian helicopters and fighter jets.

The ship’s captain was “a Libyan from Benghazi and the head of an organization called the Libyan National Council for Relief and Support,” which was presumably established by the new government.

That means that Ambassador Stevens had only one person—Belhadj—between himself and the Benghazi man who brought heavy weapons to Syria.

Furthermore, we know that [jihadists are the best fighters](#) in the Syrian opposition, but where did they come from?

Last week [The Telegraph reported](#) that a FSA commander called them “Libyans” when he explained that the FSA doesn’t “want these extremist people here.”

And if the new Libyan government was sending seasoned Islamic fighters and 400 tons of heavy weapons to Syria through [a port in southern Turkey](#)—a deal brokered by Stevens’ primary Libyan contact during the Libyan revolution—then the governments of Turkey and the U.S. surely knew about it.

Furthermore there was a [CIA post in Benghazi](#), located 1.2 miles from the U.S. consulate, used as “a base for, among other things, **collecting information**

on the proliferation of weaponry looted from Libyan government arsenals, including surface-to-air missiles” ... and that its security features “were more advanced than those at rented villa where Stevens died.”

And we know that the CIA has been [funneling weapons to the rebels](#) in southern Turkey. The question is whether the CIA has been involved in handing out the heavy weapons from Libya.

In other words, ambassador Stevens may have been a key player in deploying Libyan terrorists and arms to fight the Syrian government.

[Other sources](#) also [discuss](#) that the U.S. consulate in Benghazi as mainly being used as a CIA operation to ship fighters and arms to Syria.

Many have speculated that – if normal security measures weren’t taken to protect the Benghazi consulate or to rescue ambassador Stevens – it was because the CIA was trying to keep an extremely low profile to protect its cover of being a normal State Department operation.

That is what I think *really* happened at Benghazi.

Was CIA Chief David Petraeus’ Firing Due to Benghazi?

CIA boss David Petraeus suddenly resigned, admitting to an affair. But Petraeus was scheduled to testify under oath the *next week* before power House and Senate committees regarding the Benghazi consulate. [Many speculate](#) that it wasn’t an affair – but the desire to avoid testifying on Benghazi – which was the real reason for Petraeus’ sudden resignation. And [see this](#).

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