

CARL LEVIN, MICHIGAN, CHAIRMAN

JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN, CONNECTICUT
JACK REED, RHODE ISLAND
DANIEL K. AKAKA, HAWAII
E. BENJAMIN NELSON, NEBRASKA
JIM WEBB, VIRGINIA
CLAIRE McCASKILL, MISSOURI
MARK UDALL, COLORADO
KAY R. HAGAN, NORTH CAROLINA
MARK BEGICH, ALASKA
JOE MANCHIN III, WEST VIRGINIA
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, NEW YORK
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, CONNECTICUT

JOHN McCAIN, ARIZONA
JAMES M. INHOFE, OKLAHOMA
JEFF SESSIONS, ALABAMA
SAXBY CHAMBLISS, GEORGIA
ROGER F. WICKER, MISSISSIPPI
SCOTT P. BROWN, MASSACHUSETTS
ROB PORTMAN, OHIO
KELLY AYOTTE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
SUSAN M. COLLINS, MAINE
LINDSEY GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA
JOHN CORNYN, TEXAS
DAVID VITTER, LOUISIANA

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

RICHARD D. DeBOBES, STAFF DIRECTOR
ANN E. SAUER, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

October 9, 2012

The Honorable James R. Clapper, Jr.
Director of National Intelligence
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
Washington, DC 20511

The Honorable David H. Petraeus
Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC 20511

The Honorable John Brennan
Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and
Counterterrorism and Deputy National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Director Clapper, Director Petraeus and Mr. Brennan:

Amid the public confusion and shifting official explanations surrounding the tragic murder of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three of our fellow Americans in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012, we write to ask you to provide your best professional judgment in response to a few questions regarding the circumstances of this attack. Clarifying the record about what information our intelligence community possessed in the aftermath of the attack in Benghazi, what judgments it reached at what time as a result of this information, and what recommendations it provided to senior policymakers as they spoke publicly about these events is a matter of utmost important for the Congress and our constituents. The American people deserve answers.

We therefore ask for your prompt and thorough reply to the following questions:

- First, within 48 hours of the attack, was there credible information and reporting to suggest that the assault on our Consulate and other U.S. facilities in Benghazi should be characterized as a terrorist attack? This is certainly how it appeared to many Americans, allegedly including some members of the Administration. It has been reported that Under Secretary of State for Management Patrick Kennedy – a Foreign Service Officer with decades of experience, and the senior official responsible for the security of State Department operations – offered his personal judgment during a briefing to Congressional staff on the day after the attack in Benghazi that it had the hallmarks of a sophisticated, well-coordinated terrorist act. We are eager to know what the intelligence community knew, and what initial judgments it reached, at that time.
- Second, at what time did intelligence community agencies or elements first assess that the events in Benghazi were a terrorist attack? This is important because, as late as five days

after the attack in Benghazi, senior policymakers were still characterizing it as the result of a spontaneous demonstration in response to a disgusting video insulting Islam. Furthermore, in a letter last week, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice maintained that she was relying on the best assessments of the intelligence community when she characterized the cause of the attack in Benghazi as a spontaneous protest, not an act of terrorism, during a television interview five days after the fact.

- Finally, what information did you and the intelligence community provide to senior policymakers that led some of them to draw the conclusion as late as five days after the attack in Benghazi that it was the result of a spontaneous demonstration, not a terrorist act? Was there no credible evidence at that late date that was compelling enough for the intelligence community and the senior policymakers to draw a conclusion with at least moderate confidence that the attack in Benghazi was a terrorist act?

We look forward to your prompt reply to our questions and ask that they submitted in unclassified form. It is important for the intelligence community to clarify the confusion that still surrounds the Administration's initial explanation of the attack in Benghazi. This matter raises many critical questions for Congress to consider further, and we appreciate your cooperation and assistance in this effort.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator



Saxby Chambliss
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



Lindsey Graham
United States Senator