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Why Wasn't Secretary Clinton Interviewed?

“Partial Accountability Review Board: Serious Questions Remain Unanswered and Unasked”

*Excerpts of Remarks by Rep. Chris Smith
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
December 20, 2012
Statement for the Record*

On March 12, 1999, I chaired a hearing—the fourth in a series—that focused on the findings of the two Accountability Review Boards that had been established to probe the August 7, 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

Admiral William Crowe, chair of those two boards told my subcommittee that the bombs killed more than 220 people including 12 U.S. embassy employees and family members and 32 Kenyan national employees of the U.S. government and injured more than 4,000 Americans, Kenyans, and Tanzanians.

He said the ARBs were “most disturbed by two intertwined issues: first, the inadequacy of resources to provide security against terrorist attacks and second, the relatively low priority accorded security concerns throughout the U.S. government by the U.S. Department of State.”

Admiral Crowe sat in 1999 right where Sec. Burns and Nides sit and said “In our investigations of the bombings, the Boards were shocked how similar the lessons were to those drawn by the Inman Commission some 14 years ago.”

In direct response to Admiral Crowe’s recommendations, I sponsored a bipartisan law—Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 1999—that authorized \$4.5 billion over 5 years for “The acquisition of United States diplomatic facilities and, if necessary, any residences or other structures located in close physical proximity to such facilities, or the provision of major security enhancements to United States diplomatic facilities.”

That law beefed up security requirements for United States diplomatic facilities, including threat assessments, emergency action plans, security environment threat lists, site selections, perimeter distances, crisis management training, diplomatic security training, rapid response procedures, storage of emergency equipment, and increased anti-terrorism training in Africa.

Bipartisan appropriations bills since 1999 have funded the Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) and has completed 95 new diplomatic facilities and has an additional 40 projects in design or construction as part of the Department's Capital Security Construction Program. Also since 1999, according to the State Department, 27,649 people have been moved out of vulnerable locations into more secure, safe and functional facilities, thus improving the protection of both employees and sensitive U.S. government information. There are now 3,114 diplomatic security personnel (civil and foreign service). In 1998, there were less than 1,000 security specialists (special agents, engineers, technicians, and couriers).

So when it comes to resources—and of course we can always do a better job—authorities and funds have been increased to systematically boost worldwide U.S. embassy security over the past dozen years.

Of particular concern is the fact that the Benghazi ARB chaired by Ambassador Pickering seems to make nearly identical points—using language that is almost verbatim—to the Boards chaired by Admiral Crowe.

The Pickering ARB cites “systemic failures and leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two bureaus of the State Department.”

Admiral Crowe's ARB said, “the Boards found that intelligence provided no immediate tactical warnings of the of the August 7 attack.”

Ambassador Pickering's ARB said, “the Board found that intelligence provided no immediate, specific tactical warning of the September 11 attacks.”

According to the NY Times, “in the spring of 1998, Prudence Bushnell, the US ambassador to Kenya sent an emotional letter to Secretary of State Madeline Albright begging for the Secretary's personal help.”

The January 9, 1999 Times article noted that “Ms. Bushnell, a career diplomat, had been fighting for months for a more secure embassy in the face of mounting terrorist threats.” Secretary Albright took no action. And three months later, on August 7, the American Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were simultaneously attacked with car bombs.”

The Pickering Benghazi ARB found that “the number of Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) security staff in Benghazi on the day of the attack and in the months and weeks leading up to it was inadequate, despite repeated requests from Special Mission Benghazi and Embassy Tripoli for additional staffing. Board Members found a pervasive realization among personnel

who served in Benghazi that the special mission was not a high priority for Washington when it came to security-related requests, especially those relative to staffing.

The Ambassador Pickering ARB was vested with the responsibility of “examining the facts and circumstances surrounding the Benghazi attacks.”

1. In the lead up to the attacks were President Obama, Vice President Biden, Sec. Clinton, CIA Director Petraeus, and other high ranking White House and State Department officials aware of “repeated requests” for security upgrades?
2. Why weren’t President Obama, Vice President Biden, and Secretary Clinton interviewed by the Pickering ARB?
3. In 1999, Admiral Crowe’s ARB released a list of over 100 individuals interviewed. Has the Benghazi ARB list of interviews been made public?

With due respect to Ambassador Pickering, the Partial Accountability Review Board he chaired has apparently failed to answer or even ask pertinent questions of top leadership, including and especially Secretary Clinton.