Statement by the Director of Public Affairs for ODNI, Shawn Turner, on the intelligence related to the terrorist attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya

Sept. 28, 2012

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on U.S. personnel and facilities in Benghazi, Libya, the Intelligence Community launched a comprehensive effort to determine the circumstances surrounding the assault and to identity the perpetrators. We also reviewed all available intelligence to determine if there might be follow-on attacks against our people or facilities in Libya or elsewhere in the world.

As the Intelligence Community collects and analyzes more information related to the attack, our understanding of the event continues to evolve. In the immediate aftermath, there was information that led us to assess that the attack began spontaneously following protests earlier that day at our embassy in Cairo. We provided that initial assessment to Executive Branch officials and members of Congress, who used that information to discuss the attack publicly and provide updates as they became available. Throughout our investigation we continued to emphasize that information gathered was preliminary and evolving.

As we learned more about the attack, we revised our initial assessment to reflect new information indicating that it was a deliberate and organized terrorist attack carried out by extremists. It remains unclear if any group or person exercised overall command and control of the attack, and if extremist group leaders directed their members to participate. However, we do assess that some of those involved were linked to groups affiliated with, or sympathetic to al-Qa'ida. We continue to make progress, but there remain many unanswered questions. As more information becomes available our analysis will continue to evolve and we will obtain a more complete understanding of the circumstances surrounding the terrorist attack.

We continue to support the ongoing FBI investigation and the State Department review of the Benghazi terrorist attack, providing the full capabilities and resources of the Intelligence Community to those efforts. We also will continue to meet our responsibility to keep Congress fully and currently informed. For its part, the Intelligence Community will continue to follow the information about the tragic events in Benghazi wherever it leads. The President demands and expects that we will do this, as do Congress and the American people. As the Intelligence Community, we owe nothing less than our best efforts in this regard, especially to the families of the four courageous Americans who lost their lives at Benghazi in service of their country.

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