

A Pattern of Disregard for American Lives

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On 9/11/2012 the US Consulate in Benghazi, Libya was attacked and four US citizens were murdered. On 9/12/12 I was in a briefing at the US Consulate in Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan. The briefing by the US Dept of State Diplomatic Security Service outlined the events at the Consulate in Benghazi. We learned that for several months intelligence made it clear that an attack on the compound was being planned, and that additional security assets were requested, on multiple occasions. Those requests were simply denied by the then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. In later private conversations with various Foreign Service Officers I learned that the reason for the refusal was probably made in order to give the impression that there was no crisis in Libya and that life there was reasonably secure and improving.

This is all well known and is certainly not current news. However, an alarmingly similar event was narrowly avoided in the city of Mazar-E Sharif, Afghanistan's second largest city. In this case a site was selected for the Consulate by then US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Richard Holbrook, in 2009. At the time the site was selected the Diplomatic Security Service identified over 30 serious security violations and stated that the site could never be occupied. After spending over \$80 million on the construction with only a 10 year lease then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wanted the structure to be occupied. Both the Foreign Service officer in charge of the US Consulate at the time and the Regional Security Officers refused. I was grateful since I would have been required to move in there as well.

Secretary Clinton then decided to occupy it with short term contract employees (US Citizens) and leave the career bureaucrats safe on the German army base nearby. At that point someone with the Dept. of State leaked these details and articles appeared in both the Washington Post and Wall Street Journal. After some very bad press the \$80 million compound was never occupied.

The State Department then attempted to rent it out to both the German and Swedish diplomats. My office was just across a hallway from the Swedish Ambassador on Camp Northern Lights where the Swedish Embassy for northern Afghanistan was located. I met with him frequently and on more than one occasion he laughed and said that he feared that the US was trying to get him killed. His security detail, all friends of mine, found the whole thing laughable. It was an embarrassment to the US mission.

Through many conversations with my colleagues at the US Consulate it was thought that Clinton was determined to show the people of Afghanistan and the US that security was improving in Afghanistan and we were winning the war. The cost was \$80 million and would have placed even more US lives in danger, all to simply give the people of the Afghanistan and the US the impression that things were going well.

What does make this newsworthy is this trend to deceive the American people and to waste US taxpayer dollars. In one conversation with an employee from the US Embassy in Kabul I was told that \$80 million was just "a rounding error" in the big picture. This is not a divisive partisan issue. Rather, it is evidence of some systemic failures of our federal career employees as well as appointed public employees. These failures include a tendency to be more concerned with the appearance rather than the reality of events in conflict zones. America is better than this and we need unite in order to improve our own nation and to improve the lives of others around the world.