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**From:** Rhodes, Benjamin J. [Benjamin\_J\_Rhodes@ ]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 14, 2012 8:09 PM  
**To:** Vega, Dag; NSC Deputy Press Secretary; Plouffe, David; Pfeiffer, Dan; Carney, Jay; Palmieri, Jennifer; Earnest, Joshua R.; Govashiri, Ferial; Ledbetter, Howli J.; Selak, Dawn; Brundage, Daniel; Pelton, Erin; Alhassani, Mehdi K.  
**Subject:** RE: PREP CALL with Susan: Saturday at 4:00 pm ET

B6

**RELEASED IN PART B6**Goals:

- To convey that the United States is doing everything that we can to protect our people and facilities abroad;
- To underscore that these protests are rooted in an Internet video, and not a broader failure of policy;
- To show that we will be resolute in bringing people who harm Americans to justice, and standing steadfast through these protests;
- To reinforce the President and Administration's strength and steadiness in dealing with difficult challenges.

Top-lines:

- Since we began to see protests in response to this Internet video, the President has directed the Administration to take a number of steps. His top priority has been the safety and security of all Americans serving abroad.
- First, we have significantly increased security at our diplomatic posts around the globe, with additional resources from across the government. The safety and security of our personnel is paramount and under constant review.
- Second, we have reached out to governments in the region to make sure they are cooperating closely with us, and meeting their obligations to protect diplomatic facilities as best they can. For instance, we've seen cooperation from Yemen and Egypt cooperate significantly after President Obama called those leaders.
- Third, we've made our views on this video crystal clear. The United States government had nothing to do with it. We reject its message and its contents. We find it disgusting and reprehensible. But there is absolutely no justification at all for responding to this movie with violence. And we are working to make sure that people around the globe hear that message.
- Fourth, we've encouraged leaders around the globe to speak out against the violence, and you've seen very important statements in the Muslim world by people like Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey, President Morsi of Egypt, and others who have condemned the violence and called for a peaceful response.
- I think that people have come to trust that President Obama provides leadership that is steady and statesmanlike. There are always going to be challenges that emerge around the world, and time and again he's shown that we can meet them.

**REVIEW AUTHORITY: Sharon Ahmad, Senior Reviewer**

**Q: Are you concerned that our relationship with Egypt and other Muslim countries is quickly deteriorating? Is the Arab Spring now about hatred of America? Did President Obama lose the Arab World?**

I think we need to step back a bit. The Arab Spring was about people across the region rising up to demand their basic rights. The protests we've seen these last few days were sparked by a disgusting and reprehensible video.

The fact is, this is a time of extraordinary change in the Arab World. But we've been able to build cooperative relationships with these new governments.

You saw that in Libya, where there's been full cooperation with the United States and an outpouring of support for Chris Stevens and the work that he did.

You saw that in Egypt, where President Obama was able to call President Morsi directly, which led to the Egyptians calling for calm and providing much more security at our Embassy.

So this part of the world has been faced with unrest many times in recent decade. But we're going to keep moving forward, and we believe that strong U.S. leadership can lead to a region that is more stable and more responsive to the people.

**Q: Have you failed to articulate a policy for dealing with the Arab Spring?**

You have heard the President articulate a very consistent set of principles and support for universal rights as the Arab Spring has unfolded. We support the process of nonviolent political and economic change and reform in the region. Of course, that process will look different in different countries.

There are countries where that transition has occurred, like Egypt, Yemen and Tunisia, and we're working to help them consolidate their democracies, deal with security needs, and stabilize their economies.

In other places like Syria that are still in throes of revolution, we have opposed the brutality of the regime and are supporting the aspirations of the people.

While this process unfolds, this President has left no doubt that he will continue to protect our other interests — destroying al Qaeda, bringing our men and women in uniform home from Afghanistan, and strengthening our leadership in the world.

But the Arab Spring is going to take time to play out. This is an enormous change. And that is why we need to stay focused and firm on behalf of our principles, as the President has done.

**Q: What's your response to the Independent story that says we have intelligence 48 hours in advance of the Benghazi attack that was ignored? Was this an intelligence failure?**

We are not aware of any actionable intelligence indicating that an attack on the U.S. Mission in Benghazi was planned or imminent. The currently available information suggests that the demonstrations in Benghazi were spontaneously inspired by the protests at the US Embassy in Cairo and evolved into a direct assault against the US Consulate and subsequently its annex.

**Q: Can you explain to us again the President's comment about why Egypt was not an ally?**

Egypt is a critical partner of the United States. As you know, the President had an important conversation with President Morsi about the need to protect our embassy and personnel in Cairo, and the need to denounce the violence.

President Morsi expressed his condolences for the tragic loss of American life in Libya and emphasized that Egypt would honor its obligation to ensure the safety of American personnel. The President is very appreciative for the statement President Morsi made and for the actions he's taken to date to secure our Embassy.

This was not an effort to change our relationship with Egypt in any way. We have had a long-standing partnership with Egypt, and have supported their transition to democracy. We are now working to build our relationship with what is obviously a new government.

If Pressed: I'm not here to get into a long exchange about diplomatic terminology. The President has made it clear that Egypt is a close partner of the United States, and that we have expectations that the Egyptian government will meet its obligations to protect our facilities.

**Q: Romney's advisor said that these protests wouldn't have happened under President Romney?**

Well I'm not here to talk politics. Events abroad are unpredictable. Foreign policy challenges emerge no matter who is President. And I think that people have come to expect steady, statesmanlike leadership from this President on national security, and his response to these protests is no different

**Israel / Iran**

### IRAN

**Q: Is there a split between the United States and Israel on redlines? What are the U.S. redlines with Iran?**

The President has been clear that he is determined to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and that all options are on the table in pursuit of that goal. We share the same objective as the Israelis, and there is no daylight between us on that matter of stopping Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The question of when we would consider a resort to military action involves multiple variables and would be shaped by conditions on the ground. We will continue our unprecedented security consultation and cooperation with the Israelis as we move forward.

This President is not going to take military action unless it is absolutely necessary. But I think the Iranians know full well that he is committed to preventing them from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

**Q: Did the President rebuff Prime Minister Netanyahu's request for a red line?**

The President has always been clear about his red line. He is determined to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and that all options are on the table in pursuit of that goal. We share the same objective as the Israelis, and there is no daylight between us on that matter of stopping Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

**Q: Why did the President refuse to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu at UNGA?**

President Obama is in frequent contact with the Prime Minister, as you would expect given his commitment to Israel's security and the range of challenges in the region. And when they need to speak to each other – they do so. We also talk regularly to our Israeli counterparts at all levels of government.