

Washington, DC (Oct. 20, 2012)—Before rushing to release sensitive documents ahead of tomorrow’s presidential debate that included information that may have endangered the lives of Libyans working with the United States and compromised the FBI investigation of those who attacked the U.S. diplomatic post in Benghazi, Committee Chairman Darrell Issa referred to State Department concerns as “crap.”

In releasing these documents publicly on Friday, Issa ignored extremely explicit warnings from the State Department in a [letter](#) on October 9, 2012 that diplomatic cables and other documents obtained during his investigation contained “classified and other sensitive information, including information about the security of U.S. diplomatic missions overseas, foreign government information, and personal privacy information, the unauthorized release of which could cause damage to national security and foreign relations.”

On the same day, Issa rejected those concerns during an interview with State Department officials. Although this meeting was closed, Issa had ordered that a transcript be made, and according to the transcript, Issa said this:

“Congress doesn’t recognize and will not recognize ‘for official use only,’ ‘sensitive.’ Those are not classified. We would note it, but we would continue. Anything below Secret is in fact just a name on a piece of paper. And I think it is important to understand that. So if you have seen papers that say ‘for official use only,’ ‘State Department sensitive,’ that is crap.”

Source: Transcribed Interview of Acting Regional Security Officer David Oliveira, at page 5 (Oct. 9, 2012).

As a result, on Friday Issa released these documents publicly without taking the most basic precautions of checking with security experts, intelligence officials, or his own Committee Members to avoid compromising U.S. interests in Libya.

In addition, new claims by Issa’s spokesman that Democratic Committee Members were given copies of these documents two weeks earlier—and could have raised concerns about them—are false. Democrats were not informed about these new documents until they received

an email from Republican staff at 11:02 a.m. on Friday morning. Even then, Issa provided Democratic Committee Members with only a subset of the documents he released publicly on that day.

Issa's actions have drawn serious rebukes. Yesterday, Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, issued this statement:

“If these reports are accurate, Rep. Issa's actions are astonishingly reckless, a blatant violation of the rules of the House of Representatives, and another dangerous example of the way Republicans are placing partisan politics above the interests of our nation. It would be an extremely grave consequence of Rep. Issa's actions if individuals helping our country are harmed and suspects in this attack are able to escape justice.”

Senator Carl Levin, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, made this statement:

“While I don't see how Congressman Issa's obvious attempts to make political hay out of this tragedy will succeed in advancing his partisan goals, what is clear is that the reckless release of the names of Libyans who have worked with us could jeopardize the lives of those individuals and damage U.S. interests.”

Senator John Kerry, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, issued this statement:

“The wholesale release of State Department documents by the House Oversight Committee has exposed Libyan nationals working with the United States to possible danger. This is irresponsible and inexcusable, and perhaps worst of all it was entirely avoidable. It is profoundly against America's interests in a difficult region. ... I don't say casually that this release of sensitive materials was a moment of real incompetence and irresponsibility. ... It's bad enough that it's becoming a political sideshow presumably driven by the calendar of Monday's upcoming presidential debate, but even worse is that in their rush to make news they've exposed Libyans who were working side by side with America.”

House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer issued this statement:

“It is shameful that House Republicans have continued to politicize the attack that killed four Americans in Libya. Our focus should be on working together to bring the perpetrators to justice, and we must ensure that those who are on our side in Libya are not hurt by the irresponsible disclosure of their names.”

And during an interview this morning, Senator Dick Durbin made this statement:

“Let’s get the facts together. This idea of Chairman Issa, that he’s going to dump the names, in public, of Libyans who are risking their lives to support America and keep us safe, in an effort to get a political toe-hold in this election, is unconscionable. It is unacceptable.”