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Sent: Thursday, December 20, 2012 8:11 AM
To: CDM; Huma Abedin
Cc: Jake Sullivan
Subject: House

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Here's a summary I sent to my friends last night, who after working on the Hill themselves find the House has absurd as I do...

Speaking of the Hill, we did classified briefings today. Senate & House. Senate was the usual, long winded but dignified affair. House Foreign Affairs was a closed/classified briefing and it was an SNL skit of a House hearing:

- Though it's the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the walls of the scif are plastered with "Drug Enforcement Administration" and "Department of Justice" logos.
- Was a conference room in the basement, off the garage of Rayburn. Large enough for a big table, and can comfortably seat about 12 people in large leather exec chairs. Except, they have jammed in 19 large leather chairs. So it's one of those settings that you can't move anywhere without your hip rubbing up against a chair which then swivels with your body as you go by - even when someone is sitting in it. Even when that someone is a member of Congress.
- There is no attempt to whisper whatsoever. None. Not even staff. Was like a restaurant with the long tables that they sit multiple parties together, where you are sitting right next to someone not with you. So there are parallel conversations and the groups are only divided by subtle shifts in body language. There must have been five conversation pockets going on at once. Like when you walk into a meeting before the meeting comes to order. But this WAS the meeting.
- Throughout the whole thing, I kept looking around, thinking of movies or TV shows where there's an old age home, or people with psychological problems. They're dressed in shoddy bathrobes. Someone's got gauze around their head. Two people are playing backgammon - but doing so on a Twister board and instead of dice then are rolling zucchini. That's what the House is.
- Because all House Rs are obsessed with the President denying help to those in need that night, one of them, didn't catch his name, starts going on an on at Mullen about what the investigation found about why the USS Mesa Verde wasn't used. The Mesa Verde had this. The Mesa Verde had that. Could have saved them. It was off the coast of Libya on 9/9, where was it on 9/11? What did the investigation learn about the Mesa Verde?! Mullen said We took a very hard look at what assets were available, and that day and found no blah blah blah. What about the Mesa Verde? Congressman, I don't know but I will take that on board. When we left and got in the vans, Mullen asked someone to check. Turns out the Congressman was right. The USS Mesa Verde was off the shore of Libya on September 9th. Of 2011. On September 9th 2012 it was moored in Virginia.
- Along the side of the room there's a folding table, with a coffee maker and styrofoam cups. Like it's an AA meeting. Hi, I'm Eliot Engel, and I've been a loser Congressman for 43 years. Hi Eliot.
- Why are you hiding the Mesa Verde?!?!?!?

- I stayed at at one point for a call. Staffer who needs to let me in is wearing a purple shirt. Guy shows me the phone then points to a door and says when I'm done just knock and he'll come out and let me back into the scif'd conference room. I'm on the phone for about ten minutes, staring at the white door I'm supposed to knock on when I'm ready to be escorted back in. Hang up the phone, walk over to the door, knock on it. Door opens, revealing it's a bathroom. One of those single room bathroom, unisex, toilet & sink. He's been in the bathroom. I remain confused how his time in the bathroom correlated to my phone call. He didn't say, I'll be right out so if you're done with your call just sit tight. "When you're ready to go back in just knock and I'll come out"