New Mexico and other facilities. For many people this story began in Phoenix, AZ, but I do not think it ends there.

I asked Secretary Shinseki on May 8 to extend the investigation to cover the entire regional network, which includes Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The next day Secretary Shinseki announced an audit of the VA nationwide. Today, the VA appropriations subcommittee marked up an important bill to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs and to address these allegations. I am thankful to Chairman JOHNSON and Ranking Member KIRK for including a key provision I requested to provide funding to expand the VA inspector general's investigation, and calling out New Mexico as one of the States that urgently needs the attention of the inspector general.

These secret waiting lists, according to whistleblowers, were efforts in deception and fraud, hiding management failures. They kept appointment requests out of the VA computer system in order to cover up a waiting list to see a doctor, preventing veterans from receiving necessary care.

At worst, this deception not only kept veterans waiting but may have contributed to the death of some who were very sick. There are also reports that allege these efforts to manipulate the schedule were taken to make managers look better to receive bonuses, bonuses that were supposed to have been awarded for meeting high-quality care standards, not for failing them.

If true, this is tragic and possibly a serious crime. Thankfully, the appropriations subcommittee has taken action to freeze this bonus system while the investigation continues. I hope the full Senate will move quickly to do the same, to eliminate bad incentives which hurt our veterans.

If managers hide the extent of the wait times at the VA, then Congress does not have the right information to allocate resources to address need. Lives are at stake. We are talking here about veterans' lives. VA Assistant Inspector General John Daigh testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs regarding a facility in South Carolina. He said, ''Over 50 veterans had a delayed diagnosis of colon cancer, some of whom died from colon cancer.''

GAO's Director of Health Care Debra Draper also testified about ongoing and past issues with the VA causing veterans to receive delayed care and delayed appointments. The GAO cited these shortcomings in a 2013 report and also made multiple recommendations to the VA on how to address them.

Ms. Draper noted that the VA has not yet enacted their recommendations and that the VA still has work to do to fix problems spelled out in the GAO report. The GAO concluded that:

> Ultimately, VHA's ability to ensure and accurately monitor access to timely medical appointments is critical to ensure quality health care to veterans, who may have medical conditions that worsen if access is delayed.

The GAO report speaks to a bigger picture, one we should not lose sight of, and that is the ongoing problem with scheduling gimmicks, with ways to game the system, first identified by the VA itself in an April 2010 memo. These practices have led to delayed appointments and care. This is not an allegation, this is a fact.

Congress and the VA need to continue to work together for transparency, for accountability, and for real solutions. The allegations being investigated are very disturbing. This is not just a failure to provide timely care—that is bad enough—but also an intentional effort to cover up that failure by creating separate scheduling lists and gimmicks and harming veterans as a result.

These allegations are serious and we take them very seriously for every veteran in this country. For every man and woman who puts their life on the line to defend this country, a full inspector general investigation is essential. In some cases a criminal investigation may also be needed. We need to find out what is truly happening at our veterans' medical centers. This investigation should be thorough. It should be exhaustive. It should uncover the truth and it should hold those responsible accountable.

I also want to commend those who brought these concerns to the public and send a clear message to them: Congress will not tolerate interference or harassment with public servants who simply are trying to get out the truth, trying to do their job, and doing the very best to serve our veterans. The Whistleblower Protection Act is very clear: If you retaliate against an employee who is trying to expose the truth, then you are in the wrong.

Congress and the President should speak with one voice: We will not tolerate actions to retaliate against VA employees or contractors who shine the light on the truth.

Similarly, no one in the VA should be destroying or hiding any evidence of these practices. Destruction of a Federal record can be a crime.

VA managers should come clean, not cover up. I urge any New Mexico VA patient, family member, current or former VA employee, to report serious management problems to the VA inspector general either directly or through my office.

To those employees who continue to provide quality care to our veterans, this is not about you. Overall, the VA does provide great health care. I have heard from veterans who have testified to this fact. Many veterans would not go anywhere else. We must act quickly and decisively to restore faith in the VA and provide the care our veterans deserve.

Today, the Appropriations Committee took a step in the right direction to expand the investigation and halt the bonus program. I look forward to continuing this work with the full Senate and also with the administration. All of us who work to support our troops and our veterans have a sacred obligation to make sure they have the care they have earned. They have been there for us; we have to be there for them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

BENGHAZI INVESTIGATION

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I wish to discuss the state of play in Benghazi. Senator BOXER came on the floor this morning and talked about the investigations and all the things that have been done to find out about what happened in Benghazi.

No. 1, to those serving in Libya today, you are definitely in our thoughts and prayers. My advice to the administration is get those folks out as quickly as you can, because this thing is going downhill very quickly in Libya. So let's not have another Benghazi on our hands. I feel as though the security environment in Libya is deteriorating as I speak.

Let me, if I can, set the stage for my concern. One, I think most people on this side of the aisle, rightly or wrongly, believe that if the names were changed, this whole attitude toward finding out what happened in Benghazi would be different; if it had been the Bush administration, Condoleezza Rice, not Susan Rice, that we would be on fire as a nation to find out how the President could have 2 weeks after the attack—mentioned a video as the cause of the attack—that all the information coming from the intelligence community to the White House and others, there was never a protest. If Secretary Rice had gotten on the national news or Mr. Hadley or John Bolton, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations had gotten on television 5 days after the attack and told the story about the level of security: We believe it was a protest caused by video, not accordingly a terrorist attack—if that had all been said by the Bush people, there would have been definitely a different approach about this issue. That to me is very sad. You may not agree with that observation, but almost everybody over here I think believes that.

Mr. Zucker today—I know him from CNN; fine man—said he would not be bullied into covering the select committee. Nobody is asking any outlet to be bullied. But I have some questions I want CNN to answer, or somebody who would answer questions that I think are very relevant.

What is the state of what? As far as the Senate goes, we have had the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issue a report on January 15, 2014. I think they did a very good job covering their lane. They did not have jurisdiction over the State Department so their report was limited. There was a minority report inside the report by

Republicans taking some issues with some of the findings. But the bottom line was, the Senate intel committee, in a bipartisan fashion, looked at Benghazi and said it could have been prevented. So that is something to be positive about.

The Armed Services Committee has done nothing. They have not issued any reports. This is the report of the Armed Services Committee in the Senate looking at DOD's responsibility that night.

The Foreign Relations Committee—this is their report. Nothing looking at the State Department's behavior that night.

We have had hearings, but the relevant committees have not issued reports.

The Homeland Security Committee on December 30, 2012—Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS did a good job talking about Homeland Security's role in Benghazi, a very good report. But a lot has happened since then.

I want people in the country and the Senate to know the reason I want a select committee in the Senate. We are not the House. Two of the committees very relevant to oversight of Benghazi have not issued any reports.

The Armed Services Committee has done nothing, nor has the Foreign Relations Committee, and I think this is worthy of our time.

This is a bipartisan report issued in 2008 by the Armed Services Committee about detainee abuse. I participated in this report in the Bush administration. We had some serious system breakdowns when it came to detainees in U.S. custody.

Senator MCCAIN and I worked with Democrats to issue this report. I thought it was important to get to the bottom of system failure in the Bush administration. But I would argue that four dead Americans are worthy of a report, and we have not had one. There are a lot of things that could be done, should be done in the Senate, and have not been done.

What would I like to find out about Benghazi that we did not know? This is the Accountability Review Board, an internal investigation by the State Department. Two fine men led this investigation—appointed by Secretary Clinton. This thing has more holes in it than Swiss cheese. They missed a lot. They didn't talk to Secretary Clinton or Ambassador Rice.

In this report they talk about the reason that Ambassador Stevens was in Benghazi was that they were looking at closing the consulate in Benghazi in December. I finally got to talk to one survivor after 18 months of trying.

I found out from that survivor, the person in charge of security in Benghazi on the night of the attack, that they had renewed the lease on the consulate in July for 1 year. So that makes no sense. The report says he went there to look at closing the consulate, and they just renewed the lease in July before he went there in September. So it is not by any means an exhaustive review of Benghazi.

This is a readout on September 10, 2012, the day before the attack. This is a readout of: ''President's Meeting with Senior Administration Officials on Our Preparedness and Security Posture on the Eleventh Anniversary of September 11th.''

Apparently the President had a meeting—in the White House, I assume—with all of our national security folks talking about what we can expect on September 11 because it was the 11th anniversary of 9/11. It states:

> During the briefing today, the President and the Principals discussed specific measures we are taking in the Homeland to prevent 9/11 related attacks as well as the steps taken to protect U.S. persons and facilities abroad, as well as force protection.

I have one simple question: Did they bring up Libya? Did they talk about the security situation in Benghazi and Libya? If not, why not? Based on this statement—it is a reassuring statement to the American people that the President and his team are on top of the situation.

They were not on top of it when it came to Libya. So I want to find out if that meeting had any discussions about the deathtrap called Benghazi.

This is the security situation in Benghazi pre-9/11. On March 28 there was a request for additional security which was denied.

Our security footprint was very light. We had an agreement with a militia in Benghazi that was supposed to be our primary reaction team—a Libyan militia that proved to be less than reliable.

On April 6 an IED was thrown over the fence of the U.S. post in Benghazi. Did the President know about this? Did Secretary Clinton know about it? I assume they did, but nobody in any of these investigations ever told us that the President was aware of this.

On June 6 a large IED destroyed part of the security perimeter of the U.S. post in Benghazi, leaving a whole ''big enough for 40 men to go through.'' They commissioned a study or some kind of review. Where is it? It has been attacked in April and June. Did the President know about these attacks. They blew a hole in the wall large enough for 40 people to go through.

On June 11, 5 days later, the British Ambassador's motorcade is attacked—very close to the Benghazi facility, our facility—and U.S. personnel go help the British ambassador. After this attack, the British closed their consulate in Benghazi. Why did we leave ours open?

On July 9, there was a request from Ambassador Stevens for additional security. No response.

On July 1, Lieutenant General Neller sends an email to Under Secretary Kennedy offering additional security. Kennedy responds saying no additional DOD support is needed.

There is a 16-person Special Forces National Guard team that was ready to volunteer for an extra year to help our folks in Benghazi, and the State Department folks said: No, thanks.

On August 6, the International Committee of the Red Cross has been attacked four times. They finally close up shop and leave town on August 6. The British leave and the Red Cross leaves.

Lieutenant Colonel Wood was a National Guard soldier trying to help security doing a site security team investigation. Instead of being extended—and he volunteered to stay for 1 additional year—he was sent home in August.

On August 16—this is the most damning of all—there was a cable that was sent from Benghazi by our Ambassador telling the people in Washington that the consulate could not withstand a coordinated terrorist attack and the Al Qaeda flag is flying all over town, basically begging for additional security, letting people in Washington know: We cannot withstand a coordinated terrorist attack. Al Qaeda flags are flying all over the place.

That is the state of play. That is the background in terms of security regarding the consulate in Benghazi.

Fast forward. These are statements by the Regional Security Officer who was asking for additional security. He was so frustrated by the response he had received in Washington he said the following: ''For me the Taliban is inside the building.''

What Eric Nordstrom was talking about is that the people in Washington seemed to be completely deaf as to his needs for additional security. He thought the people in Washington were working against him, and he was very worried about what would happen if there was an attack, and he believed that one was coming.

Lieutenant Colonel Wood, a Utah National Guard Special Forces soldier who left in August, said:

> It was instantly recognizable to me as a terrorist attack. . . . Mainly because of my prior knowledge there, I almost expected the attack to come. We were the last flag flying; it was a matter of time.

This had gone up DOD channels as well as the Department of State. So that is the history of the security situation in Benghazi.

Now, to the people at CNN, to my Democratic colleagues, to anybody and everybody, please explain to me how on September 16, 5 days after the attack, Susan Rice, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations was chosen to appear on five Sunday talk shows to talk about the attack in Benghazi on our facilities. But I can assure you, she was very worried about what was going to happen—the questions regarding Benghazi—because we had four people killed.

This is what she said about the level of security on September 16:

> Well, first of all, we had a substantial security presence with our personnel . . . with our personnel and the consulate in Benghazi.

I have a question. Who told her that. Nothing could have been further from the truth. When you look at the history of the security footprint in

Benghazi, it was begging and pleading by the people in Libya to have more help and everything was denied. It was to the point that the person in charge of security felt like the Taliban were all inside the building in Washington. Lieutenant Colonel Wood said:

> We were the last flag flying. It was a matter of time.

On August 16, before the September 11 attack, there was a cable from Ambassador Chris Stevens saying: We cannot defend this compound against a coordinated terrorist attack.

Those are the facts. This is what Susan Rice told the world:

> Well, first of all, we had a substantial security presence with our personnel . . . with our personnel and the consulate in Benghazi.

I have a simple question. Who told her that, who briefed her about security in Benghazi, because the person who told her that needs to be fired because they are completely incompetent or they lied to her.

If she made this up, she needs to resign because nothing could have been further from the truth. If she just made this up to make the administration look good in light of all of the other evidence about security, then she is not an honest person when it comes to conveying national security incidents.

So, please, after all of these investigations, after all of these hearings, can somebody tell me from where Susan Rice got this information? How could she conclude, based on what we know now, that we had a substantial security presence with our personnel in the consulate in Benghazi. She went on to say: ''Well, we obviously did have a strong security presence.''

She said this on ABC and this on Fox. If you listened to her on September 16, you would believe we were well prepared for this attack and we had secured the consulate in a reasonable fashion.

If anybody had looked at the actual record—the information available to our own government in our own files—you could not have said that honestly. I am sure this was a good thing to say 6 weeks before an election. The problem is it is not remotely connected to the truth.

To this day, nobody can answer my question. Where did she receive information about the security level in Benghazi? She has never been interviewed by anybody 20 months later.

Why was she chosen? If John Bolton had taken Condoleezza Rice's place to talk about a consulate—not under his control but under her control—people would want to know where the Secretary of State was. Ambassador Rice was the U.N. Ambassador—U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. She had no responsibility for consulate security.

The person responsible for consulate security and our footprint in Libya was Secretary Clinton. I have always wondered why they chose her. To this day, no one has answered that, but Susan Rice said on 12/13/2012:

> Secretary Clinton had originally been asked by most of the networks to go on. . . . She had had an incredibly grueling week dealing with the protests around the Middle East and North Africa. I was asked. I was willing to do so. It wasn't what I had planned for that weekend originally, but I don't regret doing that.

And she further said she had no regrets about what she told the American people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Fifteen minutes have expired.

Mr. GRAHAM. I ask for 5 minutes more if I could.

Mr. SANDERS. Reserving the right to object, how much longer——

Mr. GRAHAM. Am I into the Senator's time? If the Senator is next, may I have 1 minute?

To be continued—I can't do this justice in 15 minutes, but this is what I am suggesting. If it is true that the Secretary of State could not go on television and talk about the consulate under her control and tell us about how four Americans died at that consulate—the first ambassador in 33 years—because she had a grueling week—if that is true—and I don't believe it is, but if it is—then we need to know because that will matter to the country as we go forth. If it is not true, why would Susan Rice say it?

To be continued—there is so much about this incident called ''Benghazi'' that we don't know and that makes no sense to me that I am not going to give up until I can tell the families what I believe to be the truth. And what I have been told is nowhere near the truth.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. SANDERS. I apologize to my friend from South Carolina.

Mr. President, I want to talk about an issue that millions and millions of people all over this country are increasingly concerned about; that is, last week the FCC, the Federal Communications Commission, released a proposal in response to a recent Federal court decision that struck down the Commission's 2010 Open Internet Order. The proposal would, for the very first time, allow Internet service providers to be able to pay for priority treatment.

What this means, in point of fact, is the end of net neutrality and the end of the Internet as we know it. What net neutrality means is that everyone in our country—and, in fact, the world—has the same access to the same information. Whether you are a mom-and-pop store in Hardwick, VT, or whether you are Walmart, the largest private corporation in America, you should have the same access to your customers.

Net neutrality also means that a blogger, somebody who just blogs out his or her point of view, in a small town in America should have the same access to his or her readers as the New York Times or the Washington Post.

If the FCC allows huge corporations to negotiate ''fast-lane deals,'' then the Internet will eventually be sold to the highest bidder. Companies with the money will have the access and small businesses will be treated as second- or third-class citizens. This is grotesquely unfair and this will be a disaster for our economy and for small businesses all across our country.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Commissioners Clyburn and Rosenworcel for their strong support of net neutrality. They are doing exactly what the American people want from the Commission. During last week's hearing Commissioner Rosenworcel stated:

> We cannot have a two-tiered Internet, with fast lanes that speed the traffic of the privileged and leave the rest of us lagging behind.

Commissioner Clyburn noted:

> [The] free and open exchange of ideas is critical to a democratic society.

And she is, of course, absolutely right.

I have to say—and I don't mean to be particularly partisan on this issue, but the facts are the facts—that in contrast, the Republican Commissioners, Ajit Pai and Michael O'Reilly, would like to completely deregulate the Internet. Commissioner O'Reilly said, in response to the proposal:

> As I've said before, the premise for imposing net neutrality rules is fundamentally flawed and rests on a faulty foundation of make-believe statutory authority. I have serious concerns that this ill-advised item will create damaging uncertainty and head the Commission down a slippery slope of regulation.

That is Republican Commissioner O'Reilly.

What does all of this mean in English? What it means is that when we talk about deregulating the Internet, we are talking about allowing money—big money—to talk, and allowing the big-money interests to once again get their way in Washington. That is very wrong. We cannot allow our democracy to once again be sold to the highest bidder.

I think all of us agree the Internet has been an enormous success in fostering innovation and enabling free and open speech across the country and throughout the world. We kind of take it for granted. But when the Presiding Officer and I were growing up, there was no Internet, and I think we can all acknowledge now what a huge advance it has been for business and for general communication. Unfortunately, these Republican Commissioners on the FCC want to fix a problem that does not exist. What they want is to change the fundamental architecture of the Internet to remove the neutrality that has been in place for decades—since the inception of the Internet—and to allow big corporations to control content online.

Let me say the American people—people in Vermont and across this