

“MORGAN JONES’” THREE UNVERIFIABLE CLAIMS COVERED UP HIS OWN FAILURES

As Michael Calderone reports, 60 Minutes has finally conceded they got hoodwinked by “Morgan Jones” AKA “Dylan Davies.”

I’ve heard no related concession from Dick Cheney propagandist Mary Matalin that her Simon & Schuster imprint, Threshold, published a fabrication, “Jones’” book. Until we learn how that happened – which surely drove some of the credibility 60 Minutes accorded a guy working under a pseudonym for obviously nonsensical reasons (his other name, Dylan Davies, had already been published, at a time much closer to the attack) – I think it worth examining what story he chose to tell.

The 60 Minutes platform gave “Jones” the opportunity to make 3 claims that, as delivered, were unverifiable (because there were no witnesses).

2 of them conflict with the incident report that has been his undoing. In the first – and the one that has attracted all the attention – “Jones” claimed he had heroically entered the compound and bashed some guy’s face in (but not shot him).

Not long afterwards, Morgan Jones scaled the 12-foot high wall of the compound that was still overrun with al Qaeda fighters.

Morgan Jones: One guy saw me. He just shouted. I couldn’t believe that he’d seen me ‘cause it was so dark. He started walking towards me.

Lara Logan: And as he was coming closer?

Morgan Jones: As I got closer, I just

hit him with the butt of the rifle in the face.

Lara Logan: And?

Morgan Jones: Oh, he went down, yeah.

Lara Logan: He dropped?

Morgan Jones: Yeah, like– like a stone.

Lara Logan: With his face smashed in?

Morgan Jones: Yeah.

Lara Logan: And no one saw you do it?

Morgan Jones: No.

Lara Logan: Or heard it?

Morgan Jones: No, there was too much noise.

The incident report says that “Jones” tried to drive to the compound but upon hitting Ansar al-Sharia roadblocks, his driver judged they’d be killed if they tried to get closer, so they turned back. They were gone from “Jones'” villa for no more than an hour total.

But what’s remarkable about this heroic scene is the designed unverifiability of it. Had “Jones” claimed to have shot a man, there’d be bullets missing from his gun, a dead body. Instead, he bashed the guy’s face in, which is not only more exciting, but also has the advantage of being quieter. No witness to see or hear the event.

I’m far more interested in “Jones'” claim to have gone to the hospital (guarded by the same militia whose roadblocks convinced “Jones” to turn back from the compound) to see Chris Stevens’ dead body. The incident report says, instead, that one of his guards had gone to the hospital to check after one of the guards who had been shot and while there had seen and photographed the Ambassador, and learned he had still been alive when brought to the hospital by Libyan men but then died. Crucially, “Jones'”

incident report claims he didn't tell his own Managing Director that night about Stevens (at least about Stevens' passing, but possibly even about his being brought to the hospital).

I kept quiet about the Ambassadors [sic] death as I knew there would be huge repercussions.

Compare that with what he told 60 Minutes.

Morgan Jones: I was dreading seeing who it was, you know? It didn't take long to get to the room. And I could see in through the glass. And I didn't even have to go into the room to see who it was. I knew who it was immediately.

Lara Logan: Who was it?

Morgan Jones: It was the ambassador, dead. Yeah, shocking.

Morgan Jones said he'd never felt so angry in his life. Only hours earlier, Amb. Chris Stevens had sought him out, concerned about the security at the U.S. Special Mission Compound where Morgan was in charge of the Libyan guard force.

The story was nonsensical in any case, because if an American employed contractor had seen the Ambassador's body in a hospital controlled by a hostile militia, you might think he'd claim custody of the body.

But the story does serve to let "Jones" claim that he had just spoken about security with Stevens.

Which serves a similar function as the last unverifiable claim, that Sean Smith had expressed concerns about the compound's security.

After all this time, he told us he's still haunted by a conversation he had with Foreign Service Officer Sean Smith,

a week before the attack.

Morgan Jones: Yeah, he was worried. He wasn't happy with the security.

Lara Logan: And you didn't tell him all your worries?

Morgan Jones: No. No, didn't want to—

Lara Logan: Why not?

Morgan Jones: I didn't want to worry him anymore, you know? He's a nice guy. I sort of promised him he'd be OK.

Even Smith's tweets the night of the attack make it clear he was concerned about security, so I'm sure he was. What is not clear is whether "Jones" ever had this conversation with Smith. As it is, the story now serves to explain why he didn't admit his own concerns to someone who was in regular contact with others – because Smith was a nice guy. That is, this story serves to exonerate "Jones" for not expressing concerns about security.

Now all this suggests one possible reason why "Jones" – who reportedly got fired from Blue Mountain Group – might be telling this story (though I don't rule out other ones). This was the guy in charge of hiring and training a bunch of men to guard the compound. And his force, which didn't have the appropriate experience and was badly underpaid, failed to do that job (and in fact, earlier in the summer, had been involved in an attack on the compound themselves). And when he learned that the most important principal he was defending died, he didn't tell his boss.

Which is why I find it so interesting that another of "Jones'" comments serves to shift blame for the collapse in security at the compound entirely on the February 17 Brigade (which surely deserves some of the blame, particularly in delaying the Tripoli reinforcements from getting to the Annex).

He thought this would be an easy assignment compared to Afghanistan and Iraq. But on his first drive through Benghazi, he noticed the **black flags of al Qaeda** flying openly in the streets and he grew concerned about the guard forces as soon as he pulled up to the U.S. compound.

Morgan Jones: There was nobody there that we could see. And then we realized they were all inside drinking tea, laughing and joking.

Lara Logan: What did you think?

Morgan Jones: Instantly I thought we're going to have to get rid of all these guys.

Morgan Jones' job was training the unarmed guards who manned the compound's gates. A second Libyan force – an armed militia hired by the State Department – was supposed to defend the compound in the event of an attack. Morgan had nothing to do with the militia, but they worried him so much, he could not keep quiet.

Morgan Jones: I was saying, "These guys are no good. You need to– you need to get 'em out of here."

Lara Logan: You also kept saying, "If this place is attacked these guys are not going to stand and fight?"

Morgan Jones: Yeah. I used to say it all the time. Yeah, in the end I got quite bored of hearing my own voice saying it.

So immediately after "Jones" says he knew immediately upon arrival they'd have to fire a bunch of guards who probably didn't get fired, he shifts to how often he warned about the February 17 Brigade (which in fact had defended the Americans reliably up until the day of the attack).

Nowhere that I've seen did 60 Minutes ask the underlying question, though. If the guards BMG was employing were so ill-prepared to do their job, if two of them actually attacked the compound during the time "Jones" was there, why didn't he improve the security force he had some control over?

So "Jones," reportedly out of a job, went to one of the key members of the Right Wing noise machine, Mary Matalin, and she paid him to tell a different story, one in which he, like Andy Wood and Greg Hicks, had been warning about security all summer, one in which his own role in failing to provide security goes unmentioned.

Update: As Calderone just tweeted, Telegraph reported that "Jones" had fled out of Benghazi before the attack. If that's true then both the incident report and the 60 Minutes story are false.

Update: Later this afternoon, Threshold pulled "Jones" book.

Also, Slate retracted this excerpt of it. Note one thing he emphasizes is that his guards were unarmed – blaming State entirely for their ineffectiveness.

Shortly after nightfall 50 gunmen from the Shariah Brigade—a Libyan militia tied to al-Qaida—rushed the Mission, and were able to gain access via the pedestrian entrance set to one side of the main gate. They did so by threatening the Blue Mountain guards with assault rifles and RPGs. Basically, the guards—who were unarmed and defenseless, *because the State Department contract dictated that they be unarmed and defenseless*—were ordered to open the side gate or else be killed.