Editorial: Chinook ancestors would be proud

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Chris Stevens’ family is tired of the Benghazi witch hunt

It isn't often that a remote Pacific Northwest coast newspaper figures in national affairs in even the smallest way, but Washington, D.C.’s attention briefly flickered toward Pacific County, Washington, in the aftermath of U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens’ 2012 murder by thugs in Benghazi, Libya.

Not only did the U.S. State Department reach out to provide a statement of condolence to the Chinook Indian Nation via the Chinook Observer, but CBS News came nosing around to see whether there was any vaguely interesting local
The State Department's outreach was an unanticipated but thoughtful gesture, while national media interest was the sort of due-diligence one would hope for from Edward R. Murrow's organization. Unexpected and unwelcome were efforts by some in Congress to use Chris Stevens' tragic death as a weapon to undermine the political career of then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The Stevens family has shown remarkable patience and restraint as one investigation after another tried to pin blame on Clinton and/or the Obama administration in general. Most recently, late last month Republicans who lead the House Select Committee on Benghazi issued an 800-page, $7 million report. It lambasted the State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA for failing to adequately protect the slain diplomats and respond once the attack on them was underway. Democrats on the committee labeled the entire enterprise a witch hunt.

Anne Stevens, sister of Ambassador Stevens and chief of pediatric rheumatology at Seattle Children's Hospital, cuts through all the political gibberish in an interview in the June 28 issue of The New Yorker: tinyurl.com/Stevens-Interview.

Some high points:

• The Benghazi compound wasn't well enough protected, but Congress itself underfunded State Department security.

• The latest investigation turned up nothing new. It and earlier efforts were blatantly political.

• Clinton took full responsibility and established a better security program. However, danger is an inherent part of being a diplomat in a tumultuous region. Chris Stevens and his family knew the risks and were willing to accept them.

• “It would be much more useful for Congress to focus on providing resources for security for all State Department facilities around the world — for increasing personnel, language capabilities, for increasing staff to build relationships, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East.”

Perhaps best of all in his sister’s remarks, it is refreshing to be reminded of how bright and outward-looking Chris Stevens was. His openness to the world, his courage, intelligence and sense of adventure all were exemplary. His Chinook ancestors would be exceptionally proud.