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MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2012

DOMESTIC AGENDA

Teachers Union in Chicago to Extend Strike Into 2nd Week

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By MONICA DAVEY and STEVEN YACCINO

CHICAGO — The Chicago Teachers Union extended its strike into a second week on Sunday, after significant divisions emerged among union delegates over a deal that only a day before had been described by the union's leader as "a good contract." ([link](#))

USUN IN THE NEWS

Middle East 'Extremists' Protests May Continue, Rice Says

September 17, 2012

Bloomberg Businessweek

By Angela Greiling Keane and David Lerman

The protest in Libya that killed U.S. ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans appears to have begun spontaneously and was "hijacked" by extremists, United Nations Ambassador Susan Rice said. ([link](#))

Internal Rifts Color Anti-U.S. Protests

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER

Fierce anti-American protests waned around the Middle East on Sunday, but the delicate, often tense politics that helped fuel them will be the defining dynamic in the region for some time, politicians and analysts warned. ([link](#))

Obama 'measured' on Mideast crisis: top US official

September 17, 2012

AFP

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has been "incredibly calm, incredibly steady, and incredibly measured" in his handling of the anti-US protests in the Muslim world, a top official said Sunday. ([link](#))

Israel

Israeli Leader Makes Case Against Iran on U.S. TV

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By STEVEN LEE MYERS

WASHINGTON — Having been rebuffed privately by President Obama last week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel took to the airwaves in the United States on Sunday to warn that Iran was only six or seven months from having "90 percent" of what it needed to make an atomic bomb. ([link](#))

Israeli PM makes case on Iran to US voters

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By ANNE FLAHERTY

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Archie Bolster, Senior Reviewer

WASHINGTON — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took his case on Iran directly to U.S. voters Sunday, telling the American public in televised interviews that the White House must be willing to draw a "red line" on Tehran's nuclear program, comparing Tehran's nuclear program to Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh and reminding Americans of the devastating repercussions of failed intelligence. ([link](#))

Netanyahu: Iran on brink of nuclear bomb in 6-7 months

September 17, 2012

[Reuters](#)

By Matt Spetalnick and Dan Williams

WASHINGTON/JERUSALEM - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned on Sunday that Iran would reach the brink of being able to build a nuclear bomb in just six or seven months, adding urgency to his demand that President Barack Obama set a "red line" for Tehran amid the worst U.S.-Israeli rift in decades. ([link](#))

US-Israeli Gap On Iran Nukes Widens

September 17, 2012

[AFP](#)

By Arthur Macmillan

WASHINGTON - The gap between Israel and the United States on Iran widened Sunday as Benjamin Netanyahu insisted on a "red line" from Washington, claiming Tehran is "90 percent" toward having a nuclear bomb. ([link](#))

Lebanon

Clashes over prophet film; Hezbollah urges demos

September 17, 2012

[Associated Press](#)

By ADIL JAWAD

KARACHI, Pakistan — Hundreds of Pakistanis protesting an anti-Islam film broke through a barricade near the U.S. Consulate in the southern city of Karachi on Sunday, sparking clashes with police in which one demonstrator was killed and more than a dozen injured. ([link](#))

Libya

Susan Rice: Libya Protests 'Hijacked' by Extremists

September 17, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By JOHN D. MCKINNON And COREY BOLES

An Obama administration official said Sunday that the deadly attack on a U.S. consulate in Libya last week was the work of "individual clusters of extremists" but began as a spontaneous protest. ([link](#))

U.S. downplays terror role in Libya riot

September 17, 2012

[UPI](#)

WASHINGTON -- A top U.S. diplomat said Sunday there was no evidence to suggest the protest that led to the sacking of a U.S. consulate in Libya was part of a terrorist plot. ([link](#))

Libyan president says U.S. consulate attack was premeditated; U.S. Ambassador Rice says it began spontaneously

September 17, 2012

Washington Post

By Sean Sullivan

Libyan President Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf said he is convinced a Tuesday attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi that left four Americans dead was premeditated, but the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said Sunday that the protests near the consulate began spontaneously, but were later hijacked by armed extremists. ([link](#))

US, Libya Differ On Accounts Of Benghazi Attack

September 17, 2012

AFP

By Andrew Gully

WASHINGTON - Top US and Libyan officials offered starkly different accounts Sunday about the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi that left the ambassador and three other Americans dead. ([link](#))

UN ambassador says Libya attack was spontaneous

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By JOSH LEDERMAN

WASHINGTON — A deadly assault on a U.S. consulate in Libya was a spontaneous reaction to an anti-Muslim video, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said Sunday, even as Libya's president insisted the attackers spent months preparing and carefully choosing their date — the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. ([link](#))

Video Shows Libyans Retrieving Envoy's Body

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By David D. Kirkpatrick

CAIRO - An amateur video that surfaced Sunday appears to show a crowd removing the motionless body of Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens from a window of the American mission in Benghazi, Libya, after it was attacked last week by Islamist militants, adding new details to reports that Mr. Stevens had died of smoke inhalation while locked in a safe room. ([link](#))

Libya Arrests 50 Over US Envoy Killing

September 17, 2012

AFP

By Imed Lamloum

TRIPOLI - Libya announced the arrest of 50 suspects over the killing of the US envoy and three other Americans, blaming the Benghazi attack on foreign extremists and claiming it was pre-planned. ([link](#))

TOP STORIES

Audacious Raid on NATO Base Shows Taliban's Reach

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By ALISSA J. RUBIN

KABUL, Afghanistan — An audacious Taliban attack on a heavily fortified base in southern Afghanistan did far more damage than initially reported, destroying or severely damaging eight attack jets in the

most destructive single strike on Western matériel in the 11-year war, military officials said Sunday. ([link](#))

Cultural Clash Fuels Muslims Raging at Film

September 17, 2012

[New York Times](#)

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

CAIRO — Stepping from the cloud of tear gas in front of the American Embassy here, Khaled Ali repeated the urgent question that he said justified last week's violent protests at United States outposts around the Muslim world. ([link](#))

As Scandal Shook China, Quiet Spy Game Unraveled

September 17, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By JEREMY PAGE

BEIJING—In spy-speak it is known as a "walk-in"—an unsolicited approach to a diplomatic mission by a foreigner claiming to have sensitive information. And when an agitated former police chief, Wang Lijun, entered a U.S. consulate in early February with an eye-popping tale about the death of a British citizen, the stakes could hardly have been higher. ([link](#))

AFRICA

Mali

ECOWAS Defence Ministers Meet On Mali, G.Bissau: Official

September 17, 2012

[AFP](#)

LAGOS - West African defence and foreign ministers will hold an emergency meeting Monday in the Ivorian capital Abidjan on the political and security crises in Mali and Guinea Bissau, an official statement said. ([link](#))

Niger

Niger Islamic Council Urges Muslims Not To Use Violence To Protest Film

September 17, 2012

[Associated Press](#)

NIAMEY, Niger - The Islamic Council of Niger asks Muslims not to attack Christian churches to protest the recent film on the Prophet Muhammad. ([link](#))

South Africa

South Africa Police Step Up Efforts Against Protesters

September 17, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By DEVON MAYLIE and PETER WONACOTT

JOHANNESBURG—One month after South African police killed protesters near a platinum mine in a clash that inflamed national tensions, police have stepped in again to try to end the turmoil in the country's mining sector. ([link](#))

ASIA

China

Beijing Mixes Messages Over Anti-Japan Protests

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Ian Johnson And Thom Shanker

BEIJING - Anti-Japanese demonstrators took to the streets again on Sunday in cities across China, with the government offering mixed signals on whether it would continue to tolerate the sometimes violent outbursts. ([link](#))

Anti-Japan Protests Mount in China

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By BRIAN SPEGELE in Beijing and TAKASHI NAKAMICHI in Tokyo

Angry crowds across China ransacked Japanese businesses, smashed Japanese cars and pelted Tokyo's embassy in Beijing with eggs and plastic bottles in weekend protests over disputed islands in the East China Sea. ([link](#))

Reappearance of Xi Eases Transition Concerns

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By JEREMY PAGE

BEIJING—China said that Vice President Xi Jinping, the man expected to take over as the country's top leader in the next few weeks, will attend an international trade fair this week, another apparent move to quash speculation about his health following an unexplained two-week absence from public engagements. ([link](#))

Panetta seeks closer Sino-U.S. ties as China military expands

September 17, 2012

Reuters

By David Alexander

TOKYO - U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta will look for ways to deepen military relations with China during a visit to Asia this week, even as he works to bolster U.S. alliances in the region as part of a strategic shift that Beijing views with concern. ([link](#))

Indonesia

Google Blocks Anti-Islam Film In Indonesia: Govt

September 17, 2012

AFP

YouTube has begun restricting access to videos of an anti-Islamic film in the world's most populous Muslim nation, a government official said Sunday. ([link](#))

Japan

Panetta Targets Two Pacific Disputes

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By JULIAN E. BARNES

YOKOTA, Japan—On U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's agenda as he arrived in Japan on Sunday was the goal of helping to defuse a pair of growing disputes, one between Japan and China, and the other between Japan and the U.S. ([link](#))

NEA

U.S. Outposts Still Face Threat In Muslim World

September 17, 2012

Washington Post

By Michael Birnbaum And Karin Brulliard

CAIRO - After days of anti-American turmoil in the Muslim world, governments on Sunday looked ahead to a week of trying to make an uneasy accommodation between the anger of their citizens and their desire to convince the United States of their goodwill. ([link](#))

Panetta: Violence Leveling Off; Protests To Go On

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By Lolita C. Baldor

ABOARD A US MILITARY AIRCRAFT - U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta says the turmoil raging across the Muslim world is likely to continue into the days ahead, but he says the violence expected by the U.S. appears to be leveling off. ([link](#))

Muslim Rage Over Film Echoes Back To Islam's Internal Struggles

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By Brian Murphy

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates - At the height of the latest Islamic rage, one of the Muslim world's first media-celebrity imams told worshippers they were indeed witnessing a clash of civilizations. Just not the kind you think. ([link](#))

Egypt

Egypt Denounces Breaching Of US Embassy Compound

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

CAIRO - Egypt's presidential spokesman says the breaching of the U.S. embassy in Cairo during protests over an anti-Islam film was "unjustified," denouncing it in the strongest words to date to come from the nation's highest office. ([link](#))

Iran

Iran Commander Warns Israel, US Against Attack

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By Ali Akbar Dareini

TEHRAN - The top commander in Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard warned Sunday that his country's missiles will ensure "nothing will remain" of Israel if it takes military action against Tehran over its controversial nuclear program. ([link](#))

Israel

Iran Guided By 'Unbelievable Fanaticism:' Netanyahu

September 16, 2012

AFP

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made a fresh push to turn the screws on Iran's nuclear program, saying the Islamic Republic's leaders are guided by "unbelievable fanaticism." ([link](#))

Lebanon

Pope Urges Peace at Mass in Beirut

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By FARNAZ FASSIHI

BEIRUT—Pope Benedict XVI delivered an open-air Sunday Mass in Beirut to a crowd of more than 300,000 people that touched on the central theme of his trip: peace in the Middle East, namely Syria, and endurance for the region's Christian minorities. ([link](#))

Hezbollah Calls For Week Of Lebanon Demos Over Film

September 17, 2012

AFP

BEIRUT - Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah on Sunday called for a week of angry protests across Lebanon over a US-produced film mocking Islam that triggered uproar in the Muslim world. ([link](#))

Syria

Mideast Unrest Intensifies Debate On U.S. Intervention In Syria

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Robert F. Worth And Helene Cooper

DOHA, Qatar - In recent weeks, the growing death toll in Syria pushed that country's civil war to the top of the Obama administration's agenda, with some Arab leaders pressing harder for a greater American role in toppling Syria's leader, Bashar al-Assad. ([link](#))

Elite Iranian Unit's Commander Says His Forces Are In Syria

September 17, 2012

Washington Post

By Babak Dehghanpisheh

BEIRUT - The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said Sunday that members of its elite Quds Force are inside Syria but are not involved directly in military work, the first time a senior official has publicly admitted the involvement of Iranian military personnel in the Syrian conflict. ([link](#))

State Media Says Syrian Troops Have Captured Rebel-held Neighbourhood In Aleppo

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

BEIRUT - Syria's state-run news agency says troops have captured and cleared the neighbourhood of Midan in the embattled northern city of Aleppo. ([link](#))

Syria accuses Turkey of allowing al-Qaida transit

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By ALBERT AJI and BASSEM MROUE

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syria accused neighboring Turkey Sunday of allowing thousands of Muslim extremists to cross into its territory, as the government and opposition said an explosion killed at least seven and cut off a main road leading south from the capital. ([link](#))

SCA

Afghanistan**Karzai Denounces Coalition Over Airstrikes**

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Matthew Rosenberg

KABUL, Afghanistan - Two of the most contentious issues dividing the United States and President Hamid Karzai's administration re-emerged as the Afghan leader condemned American-led forces for killing eight women in airstrikes on Sunday and denounced his American allies for continuing to hold hundreds of Afghan prisoners. ([link](#))

4 Troops Killed In Southern Afghanistan Insider Attack

September 17, 2012

Washington Post

By Richard Leiby And Greg Jaffe

KABUL, Afghanistan -Four U.S. troops were killed Sunday at a remote checkpoint in southern Afghanistan when a member of the Afghan security forces opened fire on them, military officials said. The attack brought to 51 the number of international troops shot dead by their Afghan partners this year. ([link](#))

India**India Labels Anti-Islam Film "Offensive Material"**

September 17, 2012

AFP

India on Sunday said that Google had blocked access in the country to an anti-Islam film which has triggered protests across the Muslim world as it condemned the "offensive" movie. ([link](#))

Pakistan**Pakistanis Try To Storm U.S. Outpost; One Is Killed**

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Salman Masood

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - One person was killed and dozens of people were injured when anti-American protesters tried to storm the American Consulate in the southern port city of Karachi and clashed for several hours with the police and paramilitary troops on Sunday evening, rescue workers and police officials said. ([link](#))

WHA/EUR**France****Paris Prosecutor To Probe Protest At US Embassy**

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

PARIS - The Paris prosecutor's office opened an investigation Sunday regarding a protest around the American Embassy that drew hundreds of people angry over of a film produced in the United States that insults the Prophet Muhammad. ([link](#))

United Kingdom**Muslims Protest Outside US Embassy In London**

September 17, 2012

AFP

LONDON - Hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside the United States embassy in London on Sunday to protest an anti-Islam film that has caused outrage throughout the Muslim world. ([link](#))

FOREIGN POLICY**On Web, A Fine Line On Free Speech Across The Globe**

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Somini Sengupta

SAN FRANCISCO - For Google last week, the decision was clear. An anti-Islamic video that provoked violence worldwide was not hate speech under its rules because it did not specifically incite violence against Muslims, even if it mocked their faith. ([link](#))

EDITORIAL / OPINION**The Video Did It**

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

The Obama Administration dispatched Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice to the talk shows Sunday to explain the outbreak of anti-American protests in the Arab world. Her message: It's all the fault of that 13-minute anti-Islamic video on YouTube. U.S. policies or foreign terrorists have little or nothing to do with it. ([link](#))

Amid Chants of 'Free Libya, Terrorists Out,' a Nation at a Crossroads

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By JASON PACK And ANDREA KHALIL

Benghazi, Libya – Sept. 11 is now a date that signifies a national tragedy for Libya as well as the United States. The attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi that killed four Americans, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens, has upset the delicate political transition from dictatorship to democracy that was unfolding here. It also has obscured parliament's prudent selection Wednesday of Mustafa Abushagour—a moderate Islamist and respected technocrat—as prime minister. Yet spontaneous street demonstrations throughout the week denouncing the attack and seeking to pressure the government to act against its perpetrators suggest that Libyans are determined to build an inclusive society, free from fear. ([link](#))

Bigotry, Both Fringe And State-sanctioned

September 16, 2012

Boston Globe

By Joanna Weiss

IF YOU HAVEN'T seen the 13-minute YouTube trailer of "Innocence of Muslims," it's worth a look, if only to witness the ultimate collision of bigotry and bad production values. Posted to YouTube last summer, dubbed recently into Arabic, the video features an Ashton Kutcher type as a murderous and lecherous Mohammed. It's filmed on a green screen so crude that, at times, the characters seem to be floating above the desert sands. ([link](#))

A Preventable Massacre

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Seth Anziska

ON the night of Sept. 16, 1982, the Israeli military allowed a right-wing Lebanese militia to enter two Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut. In the ensuing three-day rampage, the militia, linked to the Maronite Christian Phalange Party, raped, killed and dismembered at least 800 civilians, while Israeli flares illuminated the camps' narrow and darkened alleyways. Nearly all of the dead were women, children and elderly men. ([link](#))

Syria: The Assad Family Business

September 16, 2012

[Boston Globe](#)

By Farah Stockman

IF YOU'VE BEEN watching Syria's descent into chaos over the past 16 months, you might have been plagued by a single question: Why doesn't Bashar Assad just get on a plane and leave? ([link](#))

In An Islamist Egypt, Can Diversity Survive?

September 16, 2012

[Los Angeles Times](#)

By Michael Wahid Hanna And Elijah Zarwan

Egypt is now set to enter arguably its first period of Islamist rule. How long that period lasts and what form it takes is far from determined, a situation highlighted by the protests and violence in Cairo last week. If all goes according to plan - a big "if" in Egypt - Egyptians who believe in a democratic, civil state theoretically have the remainder of President Mohamed Morsi's term of office to get their collective act together. ([link](#))

Colombia Gambles on Talks With the FARC

September 17, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By MARY ANASTASIA O'GRADY

No one I know of has ever calculated the net present value of future cash flows from the drug-trafficking activities of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). It would be a good number to have as Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos embarks on the fourth attempt in 30-some years to reach a peace accord with the legendary terrorists. ([link](#))

Japan's Zero-Nuclear Dream

September 17, 2012

[Washington Post](#)

IT'S EASY to understand the Japanese dream of a nuclear-free future. During last year's meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex, tens of millions of residents on Japan's densely populated islands feared emergency evacuation and contamination of scarce land. Yet the government's new goal to phase out nuclear power over the next few decades would have serious costs, financial and to the climate. ([link](#))

DOMESTIC AGENDA

Teachers Union in Chicago to Extend Strike Into 2nd Week

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By MONICA DAVEY and STEVEN YACCINO

CHICAGO — The Chicago Teachers Union extended its strike into a second week on Sunday, after significant divisions emerged among union delegates over a deal that only a day before had been described by the union's leader as "a good contract."

The announcement came after nearly 800 union representatives, the House of Delegates, convened for several hours to decide whether to end a strike that has drawn national attention in the debate over teacher evaluations, job security and the length of a school day.

The decision forced 350,000 students in the nation's third-largest school system to begin another week without classes and with no strong indication of when they might resume.

Many Chicagoans had assumed school would start again on Monday, after union leaders and city officials reached the outlines of a deal on Friday, ending what had been days of long and sometimes contentious talks.

But inside the closed-door meeting of the union's House of Delegates on Sunday, opinion was split. Some delegates wanted to accept the deal and return to school immediately, while others said they needed time to digest its details, which they had not known until Sunday's meeting. Still others objected to the new terms of the contract entirely, suggesting that a resolution of this entire chapter may yet be far from reach.

"I think everybody wants to be back in the classroom, but I think everyone is nervous about a bad contract," Kevin Hough, one of the delegates, said as he left the meeting on this city's South Side, where delegates had decided in a "standing vote" to continue their strike. A clear majority, those present said, wanted to wait. "In the end I think it's wise for members to have a day to review the contract," Mr. Hough said.

The decision infuriated school system officials, who had advised parents on Friday to be ready to return their children to school on Monday, and Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who has suggested since the teachers began striking a week ago that they ought to return to the classroom even as negotiators finished the contract. Mr. Emanuel said he was now instructing city lawyers to seek a legal injunction to end the strike. He deemed the strike "illegal on two grounds," saying that it was called over issues that teachers are not legally permitted to strike about and that it endangers the health and safety of children.

"I will not stand by while the children of Chicago are played as pawns in an internal dispute within a union," Mr. Emanuel said in a statement. "This was a strike of choice and is now a delay of choice that is wrong for our children. Every day our kids are kept out of school is one more day we fail in our mission: to ensure that every child in every community has an education that matches their potential."

Beyond Chicago, the notion that the strike would not, as expected, end immediately could also prove troublesome for President Obama, who has so far stayed neutral in the fight between his former chief of staff and labor, though both are expected to play a crucial role in fund-raising and voter turnout efforts nationwide.

For some parents, the continuing crisis — and the news late Sunday that it would go on — created a crushing problem: How to juggle a second week with alternative child care. "We're spending half of our

life trying to figure out what to do with the kids this week," Roger Wilen, a lawyer and parent of three, said on Sunday evening. "This is ridiculous."

Last week Mr. Wilen and his wife had tested nearly every option for their children — finding a baby sitter, working from home, using an alternative school program, even taking the children to work — and were, by this weekend, feeling tested themselves. "We need them in school," he said.

As they had a week ago when the strike began, schools officials said Sunday that they would open 147 schools with nonunion workers as a contingency plan for children with nowhere else to go. Attendance at those alternative programs had been low in recent days, as parents said they felt uncertain about sending their children to schools they did not know and supervisors they had not met.

Sunday's developments came as a setback to the union's bargaining team, which felt it had secured an agreement its delegates might accept, even if it did not quell every concern voiced at protests across the city over the last week.

"There's all kinds of stuff that they're concerned about," Karen Lewis, the president of the Chicago Teachers Union, who played a pivotal role in negotiating the tentative deal, said as she emerged from the meeting with delegates. "This is the deal we got."

The delegates agreed to meet again on Tuesday, Ms. Lewis said, adding that the earliest that schools could open would be Wednesday. Eventually, some 26,000 union members will need to vote on whether to ratify the new contract, but the delegates had been expected to end the strike well before a vote could be completed.

It is unclear whether the tentative agreement merely needs study by union delegates and members, or whether its terms are in more serious jeopardy. All along, the contract fight here has focused on a wide array of issues, including teacher evaluations, job security, pay, benefits and more.

Earlier, negotiators for the schools and for the union had seemed satisfied with the tentative deal they had hashed out. Both sides were claiming victory about its contents.

Leaders from the school system said the most important provisions for changes — shifts pressed most notably by Mayor Emanuel — lived on in the latest proposal: students here would attend school for more hours and more days a year than before; principals would decide which teachers were hired; and teachers would be evaluated, in part, based on student test scores.

But Ms. Lewis and the union negotiators said their strongest wishes were intact in the proposal they brought to delegates on Sunday. Among their claimed victories: Teacher raises were to be maintained for those who seek additional education and for those with a certain experience level; the schools would agree to hire additional teachers to handle longer school days; and most experienced teachers could not be fired for the first year of the new evaluation system, which would be something of a test run.

"We believe this is a good contract; however, no contract will solve all of the inequities in our district," Ms. Lewis said, in a release issued on Saturday night.

The proposed contract — a three-year arrangement with an option for a fourth — would have given an average teacher a more than 17 percent raise if it ran all four years, more than had been offered a week

ago, the school system said. It was uncertain how the schools were going to pay for raises, which were predicted to cost in the "high \$300 million" range at a time when the system has a significant budget deficit, estimated at \$1 billion next year. Chicago Public Schools officials say an average teacher here makes \$76,000 a year, though union officials have said the figure is lower.

On Sunday, as David Stieber, a delegate, left the meeting, he said he wanted more time to examine the contract in all its detail. He said he also wanted other teachers at his school on the city's South Side to have a chance to look, and see what they thought.

Of the decision to continue the strike, he said, "We're showing you an example of true democracy, and that means talking to everybody — even if that takes a little extra time."

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USUN IN THE NEWS

Middle East 'Extremists' Protests May Continue, Rice Says

September 17, 2012

[Bloomberg Businessweek](#)

By Angela Greiling Keane and David Lerman

The protest in Libya that killed U.S. ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans appears to have begun spontaneously and was "hijacked" by extremists, United Nations Ambassador Susan Rice said.

Intelligence so far shows the protest began as "a spontaneous, not a premeditated, response" to demonstrations in Cairo over a "very offensive video" criticizing Islam, Rice said today on ABC's "This Week" program. "As that unfolded, it seems to have been hijacked, let us say, by some individual clusters of extremists who came with heavier weapons."

Speaking on CBS's "Face the Nation," she said, "We do not have information at present that leads us to conclude that this was premediated or preplanned."

Even so, Mohammed Yusef Magariaf, president of Libya's General National Congress, said on the CBS program he believes the attack was "planned by foreigners, by people who entered the country a few months ago" from countries including Mali and Algeria.

The Sept. 11 date of the attack "leaves us in no doubt that this was preplanned," Magariaf said, according to a transcript of the interview.

FBI Investigation

Arizona Senator John McCain, the senior Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, disputed Rice's contention that the attack on the Benghazi consulate was largely spontaneous.

"How spontaneous is a demonstration when people bring rocket-propelled grenades and heavy weapons?" McCain asked on CBS. He said there was "no doubt" the attack was waged by "extremists," though he didn't know how long it had been planned.

Rice said on ABC that a Federal Bureau of Investigation probe aims to determine what happened in the Sept. 11 attack at the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya.

Rice, speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," said protests "could percolate into the future."

"This is a turbulent time" and a "time of dramatic change" in the Mideast, she said. Those causing the violence are a "small minority" and are "the ones who lost" in the move toward democracy, the ambassador said on CNN.

The U.S. is reinforcing embassy and consulate security throughout the Middle East following protests in countries including Sudan and Tunisia, Rice said, noting that the U.S. has had a diplomatic presence in Libya for "only a matter of months" following the overthrow of dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

Visiting Tripoli

"I've visited there myself, both to Tripoli and Benghazi," she said. "I was very grateful to have a strong security presence with me."

Asked whether the violence in the region means Obama's overtures to Muslims haven't worked, she said "there have been substantial improvements." She described the U.S. as "extremely popular in Libya."

Rice said she is confident in the majority of Libyans, citing a public outcry over the killings of the Americans.

When democracy is taking root in a country, there may be "short-term turbulence," she said. People in Libya are "not going to allow an extremist mob to hijack their future and their freedom."

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Internal Rifts Color Anti-U.S. Protests

September 17, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER

Fierce anti-American protests waned around the Middle East on Sunday, but the delicate, often tense politics that helped fuel them will be the defining dynamic in the region for some time, politicians and analysts warned.

In Egypt, a presidency that is headed by an Islamist has struggled to connect with an old-regime Interior Ministry that is controlled and staffed by longtime opponents of political Islam.

Along with the Egyptian presidency's own slowness to curb a protest initially called by Islamists in the wake of last week's release of a vulgar video depicting the Muslim prophet that fueled anger at U.S. foreign policy, the friction between Egyptian leadership and security forces appears to have undermined defense of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo as demonstrators stormed the compound.

In Yemen, where four protesters died in riots Thursday outside the U.S. Embassy, an interior minister selected by that country's Islamist party faces allegations now that his ministry failed to give any order to hold back the hundreds of young men who answered that party's call to demonstrate last week. Protesters there burned vehicles and a guard post outside the final compound defense wall.

On Sunday, one person in Pakistan died in a new protest over the crude video, filmed in the U.S., that depicts Prophet Muhammad as a carouser and dullard. In Tunisia, the postrevolution government of moderate Islamists said Sunday it had arrested 75 people in connection with Friday's protests led by fundamentalist Salafi Muslims that burned some buildings in the U.S. Embassy complex and an American school.

In Washington, Obama administration officials said they hoped the deadliest violence had ended, but were planning for the likelihood of continuing turmoil, setting up contingencies for military, diplomatic and political responses.

Over the weekend, increased numbers of unmanned U.S. drones were visible in the skies over Libya and Yemen. Defense officials already have dispatched 50-member teams of U.S. Marines to protect embassies in Libya and Yemen, and moved warships toward Libya.

Although not announcing additional deployments, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said the U.S. had "enhanced" its military forces in the wider Middle East. He and aides wouldn't elaborate on the comments, made during a flight to Japan, where he arrived Sunday.

Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, appeared on several television networks Sunday to defend President Barack Obama's handling of the situation. She said a battery of phone calls by the president to Mideast leaders helped ease the crisis and showed U.S. influence in the tumultuous region.

"We're not impotent," she said in an interview on ABC's "This Week." "We're not even less popular."

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney and his supporters charge the embassy attacks resulted from Mr. Obama's foreign policies, which they contend have made the U.S. appear weakened. But Ms. Rice praised what she called Mr. Obama's "strong, steady, steadfast leadership" during the crisis and said his calls to foreign leaders helped ease tension levels.

"It was Osama bin Laden that said, 'When people see the strong horse and the weak horse, people like the strong horse,'" said Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.) on CBS's "Face the Nation." "Right now the United States is the weak horse."

As investigators probed the background of the embassy attack in Benghazi, differences emerged in the initial U.S. and Libyan versions of the events. **While Ms. Rice agreed with other U.S. officials who said the attack grew out of a protest at the embassy, fueled by extremism, Libya's leader, Mohamed Magariaf, president of the National Congress, said it had been planned in advance.**

Several U.S. officials told The Wall Street Journal last week that al Qaeda extremists were in communication with local militants on the day of the attack. **Ms. Rice didn't address the possible involvement of al Qaeda, but Mr. Magariaf said in a CBS interview over the weekend that he believes the terrorist organization was central to the attack.**

In Cairo, meanwhile, the Salafi cleric whose television show on pan-Arab al Nas channel first brought the video to widespread attention accused Egypt's new government of favoring Americans and falsely blaming Muslim fundamentalists.

"Did you forget all the nasty things America has done?" demanded Sheik Khalid Abdullah, whose channel is owned by a Saudi businessman. "You punish us when you're not able to control people burning things?"

Forces of revolution and counterrevolution traded blame Sunday for inciting the protests and for failing to act swiftly enough to quell them.

In Egypt, "the fact is that the loyalty of the police is not that good to the new administration," said Gehad el Haddad, a foreign-policy adviser to Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi's longtime former party, the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood.

Meanwhile, "the religious groups of Yemen...all were racing to send their public calls for protest," including Yemen's Islah religious party, said Tareq Saleh, who lost his job as commander of some of Yemen's most elite forces when political protests and factional fighting this year overthrew his uncle, Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemen's authoritarian leader of three decades.

An activist video from the first moments of Yemen's protests shows the country's U.S.-trained Central Security Forces—which still have as deputy commander another nephew of the ousted president—stepping aside to let protesters stream on to the road leading to the U.S. Embassy in Yemen's capital.

In Yemen, increasing U.S. strikes targeting suspected members of the country's branch of al Qaeda have increased criticism of the U.S. The crude video insulting Muhammad offended many Muslims worldwide.

In Yemen, however, "I think the whole incident was about Yemeni politics," said Fernando Carvajal, a University of Exeter doctoral candidate in San'a who is closely familiar with Yemen's many factions. That includes opposition blocs whipping up anger among the teenage and young-adult rioters, Mr. Carvajal said. "This narrative, this spin, about blaming the movie, in this country at least, is completely wrong."

In Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Tunisia, and Sudan, protests last week surged quickly into violent attacks on U.S. embassies, with little initial efforts by authorities in any of the countries to stop it, witnesses said.

With the exception of Sudan, which is led by an entrenched regime long hostile to the U.S., all the Arab countries hit by the most violent riots are headed by fragile, post-Arab Spring governments. Those governments variously include Islamist political blocs or are facing extreme Islamist groups as strengthening opposition forces.

In Libya, where a secularist government is dealing with a violent Islamist movement and many other armed groups, attackers overran a U.S. consulate on Tuesday and killed the U.S. ambassador and three American staffers, in one of the deadliest attacks ever on a U.S. Embassy staff.

Across the region, "we're now talking about [extreme Islamist forces] feeling compelled to take on governments and leaders who have the legitimacy of the popular mandates, and yet [the extreme Islamist forces] feel that they must," said Salman Shaikh, director of the Doha, Qatar, center of the Brookings Institution think tank.

For the former opposition parties now leading governments in countries changed by Arab Spring revolutions, "they have to realize they do have a popular mandate, they are the leaders, and these

protests are doing immense harm to the reputation and the economy of these countries," said Mr. Shaikh.

In Saudi Arabia, security forces on Friday, the peak day of violence in some countries, demonstrated how a nearly-century-old monarchy deals with Islamist protests. At a Riyadh McDonalds picked by Salafists as the site for a protest, security forces skidded up to each small group of white-robed Saudi men who tried to rally, the lights on their cars flashing. In a country where such defiance can bring interrogation or detention, the would-be Saudi demonstrators stuck their hands in their robes, and strolled away.

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Obama 'measured' on Mideast crisis: top US official

September 17, 2012

[AFP](#)

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has been "incredibly calm, incredibly steady, and incredibly measured" in his handling of the anti-US protests in the Muslim world, a top official said Sunday.

The robust defense of the president from US ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice follows criticism from Republican opponents that Obama's leadership is weak and has encouraged extremists to exploit the Arab Spring.

"What we've seen is that the president has been incredibly calm, incredibly steady, and incredibly measured in his approach to this set of developments," Rice told ABC's "This Week" program.

"His interventions, his leadership, has ensured that in Egypt, in Yemen, in Tunisia, in Libya, and many other parts of the world, that leaders have come out and made very plain that there's no excuse for this violence."

Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney urged a tough line Saturday on Egypt amid deadly anti-US violence in the region, as his election running mate Paul Ryan called for greater "moral clarity" in Obama's foreign policy.

Romney toned down his rhetoric Thursday after several negative headlines and complaints from within his own party that he had made an ill-timed mischaracterization of Obama's handling of rapidly escalating events.

But on Friday Romney's pick for vice president, Ryan, led a withering attack on Obama's foreign policy, accusing it of diminishing America's global standing and of emboldening extremists.

"Peace, freedom, and civilized values have enemies in this world, as we have been reminded by events in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen," Ryan told the conservative Values Voter Summit in Washington.

Rice hit back at claims the administration was "impotent" and insisted that the demonstrations involved only a small number of people and that the United States was still broadly popular in the Muslim world.

"President Obama picked up the phone and talked to President (Mohammed) Morsi in Egypt. And as soon as he did that, the security provided to our personnel in our embassies dramatically increased," she said.

"We're not impotent, were not even less popular."

Obama leads Romney by a significant margin in surveys of who voters trust more to conduct US foreign policy. On November 6, the American people will decide whether to re-elect Obama or insert Romney into the White House.

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Israeli Leader Makes Case Against Iran on U.S. TV

September 17, 2012

[New York Times](#)

By STEVEN LEE MYERS

WASHINGTON — Having been rebuffed privately by President Obama last week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel took to the airwaves in the United States on Sunday to warn that Iran was only six or seven months from having "90 percent" of what it needed to make an atomic bomb.

Mr. Netanyahu received sharp criticism at home and abroad for similar remarks last week, which were widely seen as an effort to put pressure on Mr. Obama to act more forcefully against Iran. And yet, less than two months before Election Day, he turned to the weekly platform for American politics — the Sunday morning political talk shows — to make his case more urgently and specifically than ever to a wider American audience.

He repeated his warning that the only way to stop Iran was for the United States to draw a distinct "red line" on that country's nuclear activity and declare that crossing it would trigger military intervention. But he also offered his most explicit description to date of the level of nuclear development that he would regard as particularly dangerous: one bomb's worth of medium-enriched uranium, a level that would take Iran close to a bomb but would still require additional work to make a weapon.

He implied that Iran would cross that line soon. "You know, they're in the last 20 yards, and you can't let them cross that goal line," Mr. Netanyahu said on the NBC News program "Meet the Press," displaying his familiarity with American football, another Sunday ritual here. "You can't let them score a touchdown, because that would have unbelievable consequences, grievous consequences for the peace and security of us all, of the world really."

Iran, which denies that it is pursuing nuclear weapons, warned on Sunday that it would retaliate across the region if it came under attack.

The warnings and threats came after a tumultuous and violent week in the Middle East, which left the Obama administration reeling at times and straining to sustain relations with two allies that have long been viewed as pillars of stability in the region, Israel and Egypt.

On several Sunday shows, Susan E. Rice, the American representative at the United Nations, sought to defend the administration's handling of each relationship. She said that the United States cooperated closely with Israel but believed there was time for diplomacy and sanctions in the case of Iran.

In the case of Egypt, she argued against cutting the annual \$1.5 billion in American assistance, an action that some have urged in the wake of the storming of the American Embassy in Cairo last week.

"We think that despite this very bumpy path we're on and the very disturbing images we've seen, it's in the United States' fundamental interest that people have the ability to choose their own governments — that these governments be democratic and free," Ms. Rice said on "Meet the Press." "That's in our long-term best interest. We need to reinforce that with our assistance."

The protests, which were inspired by an American-made video denigrating the Prophet Muhammad, spread from Cairo to Libya, where the American ambassador, J. Christopher Stevens, and three other Americans were killed. Since then, the protests have spread to nearly two dozen countries and forced the State Department to evacuate all but emergency staff members from its embassies in Sudan and Tripoli, Libya, on Saturday, though the intensity of the demonstrations appeared to be subsiding.

Mr. Netanyahu, who also appeared on the CNN program "State of the Union" on Sunday, sought to link the violence with Iran's nuclear ambitions, arguing that Iran's leaders were driven by the same fanaticism that enraged the protesters. Israel has its own nuclear weapons arsenal, though it has never publicly acknowledged it.

"All the things that you see now in these mobs storming the American Embassies is what you will see with a regime that would have atomic bombs," he said on CNN. "You can't have such people have atomic bombs."

In Iran, the commander of the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, took the unusual step of holding a news conference on Sunday to warn that "nothing will remain" in Israel if it or any other nation launches attacks against his country.

He said that Iran and its allies — presumably Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza — would retaliate at Israel's borders, as would Iran itself in Israel and beyond, targeting American military bases in the Persian Gulf and shutting down the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has often threatened to counter any attack, but the general's threats were unusually specific and signaled Iran's intent to turn any possible attack into a regional conflict.

"Our response to Israel is clear: I think nothing will remain of Israel," General Jafari said, according to an account by The Associated Press. "Given Israel's small land area and its vulnerability to a massive volume of Iran's missiles, I don't think any spot in Israel will remain safe."

General Jafari also confirmed, in what appeared to be the clearest terms so far, that some high-level advisers from his elite unit were working in Syria and Lebanon, underscoring how deeply intertwined the many conflicts in the region have become.

The United States and Israel have cooperated closely over most security matters for years, including Iran's nuclear efforts, but Mr. Netanyahu's remarks over the last week underscored his desire that the administration act more forcefully with Iran. It also highlighted his evident personal estrangement with Mr. Obama.

The two spoke by telephone on Tuesday after Mr. Netanyahu's first remarks.

While the United States and the International Atomic Energy Agency have cited Iranian efforts to accelerate work on enriching uranium, American officials say there is not hard and clear evidence that Iran has resumed work on the military components necessary to build a bomb.

Iran possesses enough low-enriched uranium to make five or six weapons, but that process would be lengthy. Mr. Netanyahu is particularly concerned about a new line of production of uranium largely being conducted in a deep underground site invulnerable to Israeli attack. Iran is expected to have roughly a bomb's worth of that medium-enriched uranium within half a year.

Despite Mr. Netanyahu's contention that Iran is close to developing a nuclear weapons capacity, administration officials have said there would still be time for the United States and others to detect and, if necessary, respond to an effort to move from merely enriching to constructing a bomb.

The differences between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Obama were fully on display on Sunday. Ms. Rice argued that international diplomacy and economic sanctions were having an impact on Iran and should be given time to work.

"They are not there yet," she said, referring to the American assessment of where Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions stand. "They are not there yet, and our assessment is — and we share this regularly with our Israeli counterparts in the intelligence and defense community — that there is time and space for the pressure we are mounting, which is unprecedented in terms of sanctions, to still yield results."

Mr. Netanyahu insisted that he was not trying to influence American politics. He expressed respect for Mr. Obama's vow not to allow Iran to acquire an atomic bomb.

Asked specifically if he felt that Mr. Obama's Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, would take a firmer stand toward Iran, Mr. Netanyahu demurred.

Mr. Romney and Mr. Netanyahu, who are friends, worked together briefly in the 1970s at Boston Consulting Group.

"What's guiding my statements is not the American political calendar but the Iranian nuclear calendar," he said.

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Israeli PM makes case on Iran to US voters

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By ANNE FLAHERTY

WASHINGTON — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took his case on Iran directly to U.S. voters Sunday, telling the American public in televised interviews that the White House must be willing to draw a "red line" on Tehran's nuclear program, comparing Tehran's nuclear program to Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh and reminding Americans of the devastating repercussions of failed intelligence.

His remarks were an impassioned election-season plea from a world leader who insists he doesn't want to insert himself into U.S. politics and hasn't endorsed either candidate. But visibly frustrated by U.S. policy under President Barack Obama, the hawkish Israeli leader took advantage of the week's focus on unrest across the Muslim world and America's time-honored tradition of the Sunday television talk shows to appeal to Americans headed to the polls in less than two months.

Tehran claims its nuclear program is peaceful. Netanyahu said the U.S. would be foolish to believe that, using football metaphors and citing example of past terrorist attacks on U.S. soil to appeal to his American audience.

"It's like Timothy McVeigh walking into a shop in Oklahoma City and saying, 'I'd like to tend my garden. I'd like to buy some fertilizer.' ... Come on. We know that they're working on a weapon," Netanyahu said.

The past week, Netanyahu has called on Obama and other world leaders to state clearly at what point Iran would face a military attack. But Obama and his top aides, who repeatedly say all options remain on the table, have pointed to shared U.S.-Israeli intelligence that suggests Iran hasn't decided yet whether to build a bomb despite pursuing the technology and that there would be time for action beyond toughened sanctions already in place.

Netanyahu disagrees, estimating that Iran is about six months away from having most of the enriched uranium it needs and warning that letting them reach the "goal line" would have disastrous consequences.

Obama's Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, has said he is willing to take a tougher stance than Obama against Iran, although his campaign has declined to provide specifics. He has also aligned himself personally with Netanyahu, casting the Israeli leader as a longtime friend.

Meanwhile, Obama is reported to have a strained relationship with Netanyahu, chastising Israel for continuing to build housing settlements in areas disputed with the Palestinians.

America's ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, responded Sunday by saying there is "no daylight" between the U.S. and Israel and saying Obama "will do what it takes" to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. But, she said, "we are not at that stage yet."

"Our bottom line — if you want to call it a red line — the president's bottom line has been that Iran will not acquire a nuclear weapon, and we will take no option off the table to ensure that it does not acquire a nuclear weapon, including military," Rice later said.

But Netanyahu has said that's not enough and employed historical examples known to most Americans to make his case: President John F. Kennedy's demand that the Soviets remove its missiles sites in Cuba "maybe purchased decades of peace," Netanyahu said. And absent a similar "red line," then-Iraqi President Saddam Hussein faced a U.S. attack in 1991 after invading Kuwait.

"Maybe that war could have been avoided," Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu also pointed to America's inability to prevent the 9/11 hijackings as proof that intelligence can fail.

He insisted that his motivations were not political but reflected a key sense of urgency. Israeli officials point to Iranian enrichment of uranium, a key ingredient in building a bomb, the movement of Iranian nuclear research facilities to fortified underground bunkers impervious to attack and Iran's refusal to open its facilities to U.N. inspectors.

"I think that there's a common interest of all Americans, of all political persuasions, to stop Iran," he said. "This is a regime that is giving vent to the worst impulses that you see right now in the Middle East."

Rice said the window to act "is not infinite" but that the sanctions "reached their high point in July." Rice says that for the first time the Iranian economy is shrinking at a rate of negative 1 percent, Iranian oil production has dropped 40 percent over the last several months and their currency has plummeted 40 percent in that time as well.

"This pressure, even to use the Iranians own words, is crippling," Rice said, adding, "What is clear is that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon."

Netanyahu and Rice spoke on CNN's "State of the Union" and NBC's "Meet the Press." Rice also spoke on "Fox News Sunday" and appeared on CBS' "Face the Nation."
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Netanyahu: Iran on brink of nuclear bomb in 6-7 months

September 17, 2012

[Reuters](#)

By Matt Spetalnick and Dan Williams

WASHINGTON/JERUSALEM - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned on Sunday that Iran would reach the brink of being able to build a nuclear bomb in just six or seven months, adding urgency to his demand that President Barack Obama set a "red line" for Tehran amid the worst U.S.-Israeli rift in decades.

Taking to the airwaves to make his case directly to the American public, Netanyahu said that by mid-2013 Iran would have 90 percent of the material it needed for an atomic weapon. He again pressed the United States to spell out limits that Tehran must not cross if it is to avoid military action - something Obama has refused to do.

"You have to place that red line before them now, before it's too late," Netanyahu told NBC's "Meet the Press" program, saying that such a move could reduce the chances of having to attack Iran's nuclear sites.

The unusually public dispute between close allies - coupled with Obama's decision not to meet with Netanyahu later this month - has exposed a gaping U.S.-Israeli divide and stepped up pressure on the U.S. leader in the final stretch of a tight presidential election campaign.

It was Netanyahu's most specific explanation yet on why he has become so strident in his push for Washington to confront Tehran with a more forceful ultimatum. At the same time, his approach could stoke further tensions with Obama, with whom he has had a notoriously testy relationship.

U.S. officials say Iran has yet to decide on a nuclear "breakout" - a final rush to assemble components for a bomb - and they express high confidence that it is still at least a year away from the capacity to build one and would then need more time to fit a warhead onto a missile. This contrasts with Netanyahu's timetable, although he stopped short of saying Iran had decided to manufacture a weapon.

Netanyahu showed no signs of backing off from his pressure campaign and equated the danger of a nuclear-armed Iran with the Islamist fury that fueled attacks on U.S. embassies across the Muslim world last week.

"It's the same fanaticism that you see storming your embassies today. You want these fanatics to have nuclear weapons?" Netanyahu asked in the NBC interview, in a clear emotional appeal to Americans still reeling from the angry protests sparked by a film that mocked the Prophet Mohammad.

There have been no accusations, however, of any Iranian role stoking violence that hit Middle Eastern and African capitals.

'IN THE RED ZONE'

Speaking via satellite from Jerusalem, Netanyahu argued that a credible U.S. ultimatum was needed to curb Iran, which denies it is seeking a nuclear bomb.

"They're in the 'red zone,'" Netanyahu said, using an American football metaphor for when a team is close to scoring a touchdown. "You can't let them cross that goal line."

Mohammad Al Jafari, commander-in-chief of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, threatened retaliation for any Israeli attack, saying U.S. bases in the region would be hit and trade via the Strait of Hormuz, a vital oil link, would be disrupted.

"Nothing of Israel would remain," he said.

Susan Rice, Obama's U.N. envoy, offered no sign that Obama - who has asked Netanyahu to hold off on any strike on Iran's nuclear sites to give sanctions and diplomacy time to work - intended to soften his resistance to red lines.

"We will take no option off the table to ensure that (Iran) does not acquire a nuclear weapon, including a military option," Rice told "Meet the Press," reiterating Obama's longstanding position but insisting "they are not there yet."

Israeli leaders, who see Iran's nuclear advances as a looming existential threat, have made clear they are operating on a far tighter window than the United States, which has a superpower's mighty conventional arsenal at its disposal.

Asked whether Israel was closer to acting on its own, Netanyahu said: "We always reserve the right to act. But I think that if we are able to coordinate together a common position, we increase the chances that neither one of us will have to act."

Obama, who is seeking re-election in November, has faced criticism from Republican rival Mitt Romney that the president is being too tough with Israel and not tough enough with Iran.

But Netanyahu took a more neutral posture on the election, denied he was meddling in U.S. politics in support of fellow conservative Romney and distanced himself from the Republican's accusation that Obama was "throwing Israeli under the bus."

Netanyahu's sharpened rhetoric in recent days had fueled speculation that Israel might attack Iran before the U.S. election, believing that Obama would give it military help and not risk alienating pro-Israeli voters.

Netanyahu has drawn criticism at home for overplaying his hand. He faces divisions within the Israeli public and his cabinet that will make it hard to launch a strike any time soon.

He said he appreciated Obama's assurances Iran would not be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon. But Netanyahu, whose "red line" demands have infuriated U.S. officials, made clear that was not enough. "I think a red line, in this case, works to reduce the chances of the need for military action," he said.

MOVING RAPIDLY

In his most specific comments on Iran's nuclear work, Netanyahu told CNN: "They're moving very rapidly to completing the enrichment of the uranium that they need to produce a nuclear bomb. In six months or so they'll be 90 percent of the way there."

He appeared to be referring to Iran's enrichment of uranium to 20 percent purity, a level it says is required for medical isotopes but which also is close to bomb-fuel grade. According to an August report by U.N. inspectors, Iran has stockpiled 91.4 kg of the 20 percent material.

Experts say about 200-250 kg (440-550 pounds) would be the minimum required to enrich further into enough material for a bomb. Iran could potentially reach that threshold soon by producing roughly 15 kg (33 pounds) a month, a rate that could be speeded up if it activates new uranium centrifuges.

Israel's concern is that Iran be prevented from reaching nuclear weapons capability, not just from developing an actual device, and they worry time is running out. Israel is widely believed to possess the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal.

Netanyahu did not repeat his harshest comments of last week that Washington had lost any "moral right" to restrain Israel because it had refused to put strict U.S. limits on Tehran.

That was followed by word that Obama would not meet Netanyahu during the Israeli leader's U.S. visit later this month to address the United Nations - widely viewed as a snub.

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US-Israeli Gap On Iran Nukes Widens

September 17, 2012

AFP

By Arthur Macmillan

WASHINGTON - The gap between Israel and the United States on Iran widened Sunday as Benjamin Netanyahu insisted on a "red line" from Washington, claiming Tehran is "90 percent" toward having a nuclear bomb.

The Israeli leader, speaking on two US political television talkshows, pressed the need for a categorical bar on Iran, saying such a safeguard had averted nuclear calamity with Russia during the Cold War and could ensure peace again.

The United States says all options against Iran, including military action, remain on the table, but top officials reject so-called "red lines" as political grandstanding that might leave them at a strategic disadvantage.

On CNN and on NBC's "Meet the Press," Netanyahu maintained that telling Iran there is a definite line it must step back from would serve as a preemptive and effective deterrent.

"If they know there's a point, a stage in the enrichment or other nuclear activities that they cannot cross because they'll face consequences, I think they'll actually not cross it," he told CNN's "State of the Union."

"It's important to put a red line before them, and that's something we should discuss with the United States."

The Israeli prime minister said Iran was moving rapidly to complete enrichment of the uranium needed to produce a nuclear bomb. "In six months or so, they'll be 90 percent of the way there," he said.

But his call for a change of tack and stiffer warnings from Washington was rejected by Susan Rice, the US ambassador to the United Nations.

Rice, who spoke on five separate television talkshows, maintained there was "no daylight" between the US and Israel on preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, but her comments on the timescale of Tehran's ambitions jarred with Netanyahu's judgment.

"We think that there's still considerable time for this pressure to work," Rice said, refusing to acknowledge the red lines argument and insisting that US sanctions were effectively hobbling Iran's currency and oil production.

But she added: "This is not an infinite window, and we've made very clear that the president's bottom line is Iran will not have a nuclear weapon."

Israel has consistently said a nuclear-armed Iran would pose an existential threat to the Jewish state and has wielded the threat of military action, but the United States favors sanctions and diplomatic arm-twisting.

Iran has steadfastly denied that it is seeking the bomb.

Relations between Netanyahu and President Barack Obama are viewed as frosty, and US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta further highlighted policy differences in an interview published Friday.

"The fact is, look, presidents of the United States, prime ministers of Israel or any other country -- leaders of these countries don't have, you know, a bunch of little red lines that determine their decisions," Panetta said.

"What they have are facts that are presented to them about what a country is up to, and then they weigh what kind of action is needed to be taken in order to deal with that situation," he told Foreign Policy magazine.

"That's the real world. Red lines are kind of political arguments that are used to try to put people in a corner."

The White House was forced in recent days to deny a report that Obama had refused to meet Netanyahu in New York later this month, and said the two spoke by telephone on Tuesday and were united in their stance toward Tehran.

With Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney accusing Obama of being a poor friend to Israel, Netanyahu has denied that he is meddling in US politics ahead of elections on November 6.

Rice said that US-Israeli relations were "stronger than ever," and insisted the only reason Netanyahu and Obama would not meet at the upcoming UN General Assembly in New York was because their schedules did not match.

But Senator John McCain, the Republican presidential nominee who lost to Obama in 2008, said there was a clear gap between Israel and the White House on where the red line lies.

"In the administration's view, it's when (Iran) has a nuclear weapon," and in Israel's view, it's when Tehran has reached the level where they can quickly assemble a nuclear weapon," McCain told CBS's "Face the Nation."

"That's a big difference," he said.

The threat of war, however, remains severe, according to Martin Indyk, a former US ambassador to Israel.

"I'm afraid that 2013 is going to be a year in which we're going to have a military confrontation with Iran," he said on "Face the Nation."

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Clashes over prophet film; Hezbollah urges demos

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By ADIL JAWAD

KARACHI, Pakistan — Hundreds of Pakistanis protesting an anti-Islam film broke through a barricade near the U.S. Consulate in the southern city of Karachi on Sunday, sparking clashes with police in which one demonstrator was killed and more than a dozen injured.

In a move that could escalate tensions around the Arab world, the leader of the Hezbollah militant group called for protests against the movie, saying protesters should not only 'express our anger' at U.S. embassies but urge leaders to act.

The film, which denigrates Islam's Prophet Muhammad, has sparked violent protests in many Muslim countries in recent days, including one in Libya in which the U.S. ambassador was killed. The U.S. has responded by deploying additional military forces to increase security in certain hotspots.

In a televised speech, Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said the U.S. must be held accountable for the film, which was produced in the United States. The U.S. government has condemned the film.

"The ones who should be held accountable and boycotted are those who support and protect the producers, namely the U.S. administration," Nasrallah said. He called for protests on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

He urged protesters to call on their leaders to express their anger too.

"We should not only express our anger at an American embassy here or there. We should tell our rulers in the Arab and Muslim world that it is 'your responsibility in the first place' and since you officially represent the governments and states of the Muslim world you should impose on the United States, Europe and the whole world that our prophet, our Quran and our holy places and honor of our Prophet be respected," he told his followers in a televised speech.

Nasrallah said he waited to speak out about the film until Sunday, when Pope Benedict XVI ended his three-day trip to Lebanon.

In Pakistan, police fired tear gas and water cannons at the protesters in Karachi after they broke through the barricade and reached the outer wall of the U.S. Consulate, police officer Mohammad Ranjha said. The protesters threw stones and bricks, prompting the police to beat back the crowd with their batons. The police and private security guards outside the consulate also fired in the air to disperse the crowd.

One protester was killed during the clash, said Ali Ahmar, spokesman for the Shiite Muslim group that organized the rally.

An official with the main ambulance service in the city, Khurram Ahmad, confirmed they carried away one dead protester and 18 others who were injured.

All Americans who work at the consulate, which is located in the heart of Karachi, were safe, Rian Harris, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, said. Thousands more held peaceful demonstrations against the film in other parts of the country, including the eastern city of Lahore and the northwest city of Dera Ismail Khan.

The demonstration in Lahore was organized by Jamaat-ud-Dawa, believed to be a front organization for a powerful militant group blamed for attacks in the Indian city of Mumbai in 2008 that killed over 160 people. The protesters shouted anti-U.S. slogans and burned an American flag.

"Our war will continue until America is destroyed!" shouted some of the protesters. "Dog, dog, America is a dog!" chanted others.

The head of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, who has a \$10 million U.S. bounty on his head, addressed the crowd and demanded the Pakistani government shut down the U.S. Embassy and all consulates in the country until the filmmakers are punished.

The protests were set off by a low-budget, crudely produced film called "Innocence of Muslims," which portrays Muhammad as a fraud, a womanizer and a child molester. A 14-minute excerpt of the film, which is both in English and dubbed into Arabic, has been available on YouTube, although some countries have cut access to the site.

The violence began Tuesday when mainly Islamist protesters climbed the U.S. Embassy walls in the Egyptian capital of Cairo and tore down the American flag from a pole in the courtyard.

Chris Stevens, the U.S. ambassador to Libya, also was killed Tuesday along with three other Americans, as violent protesters stormed the consulate in Benghazi. President Barack Obama has vowed that the attackers would be brought to justice but also stressed that the U.S. respects religious freedom.

In a security shake-up following the attack on the consulate, the Libyan interior minister has fired three security officials in the eastern city, including the head of the Benghazi security sector, and the deputy interior minister in Benghazi, said senior security official Adel Rajouba.

The decisions came following a government meeting and the three were fired because of "the lawlessness," Rajouba said.

The intensity of the anti-American fervor initially caught U.S. leaders by surprise, but in the last several days the Obama administration has called for calm and urged foreign governments to protect American interests in their countries.

"I think that we have to continue to be very vigilant because I suspect that ... these demonstrations are likely to continue over the next few days, if not longer," U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told reporters Sunday.

It has been unclear how much of the violence was spontaneously triggered by the film and how much of it was spurred on by anti-American militants using it as a tool to grow and enrage the crowds.

Libya's Interim President Mohammed el-Megarif said Sunday that the attackers who killed the U.S. ambassador in the country appeared to have spent months preparing and carefully choosing their date — the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. He pointed to a second raid on a safe house. "All this indicates clearly that the attackers are well trained and well prepared and have planned this in advance," he said in an interview.

But the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, brushed aside his assessment, saying evidence gathered so far indicated it was a spontaneous reaction to the anti-Islam video and not a premeditated or coordinated strike.

"It seems to have been hijacked, let us say, by some individual clusters of extremists who came with heavier weapons," said Rice, referring to the mortars and rocket-propelled grenades used in the attack.

Whether the attackers had ties to al-Qaida or other terrorist groups has yet to be determined, Rice said, noting that the FBI has yet to complete its investigation.

It wouldn't be the first time that Western works critical of Islam have triggered spontaneous unrest throughout the Middle East, she said, pointing to the novel "Satanic Verses" by British author Salman Rushdie and the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad published by a Danish newspaper in 2006.

A semiofficial religious foundation in Iran increased a reward it had offered for killing Rushdie to \$3.3 million from \$2.8 million, a hard-line Iranian newspaper reported Sunday, a move that appeared to be linked to the protests against the video.

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Susan Rice: Libya Protests 'Hijacked' by Extremists

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By JOHN D. MCKINNON And COREY BOLES

An Obama administration official said Sunday that the deadly attack on a U.S. consulate in Libya last week was the work of "individual clusters of extremists" but began as a spontaneous protest.

United Nations' Ambassador Susan Rice's comments on ABC's "This Week" contradict those of the head of the new Libyan congress, Mohamed al-Magariaf, who said the attack was planned by al Qaeda-linked militants before the protests began.

Libya's interim president, Mohammed Al-Megarif, suggested on Sunday that al-Qaeda was behind the deadly assault on the US consulate in Benghazi, which claimed the life of the US ambassador.

Ms. Rice said on ABC that the assault on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi Tuesday started with a "small number of people" seeking to replicate a violent protest that had broken out in Cairo. "And then as that unfolded, it seems to have been hijacked, let us say, by some individual clusters of extremists who came with heavier weapons, weapons that ... in the wake of the revolution in Libya ... are quite common and accessible," she said. "And it then evolved from there."

Mr. Magrief said, in contrast, "if you take into account the weapons used, like RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] and other heavy weapons, it proves that it was preplanned. It's a dirty act of revenge that has nothing to do with religion."

The consulate attack in Benghazi killed four Americans, including the U.S. ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens. A question that has lingered since is whether it started as a spontaneous protest or had been planned by extremists.

Several U.S. officials said last week that local militants, communicating with al Qaeda extremists about the protest, were responsible for the deadly turn. Ms. Rice didn't address the possible involvement of al Qaeda; Libya's Mr. Magariaf insists that al Qaeda was involved.

A senior Republican lawmaker said Sunday that the attack was clearly an act of terrorism. "Most people don't bring rocket-propelled grenades and heavy weapons to a demonstration," said Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.), the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, on CBS's "Face the Nation." "That was an act of terror. For anyone to disagree with that fundamental fact is really ignorant of the facts."

Rep. Mike Rogers (R., Mich.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said on "Fox News Sunday" it was too early to tell whether the attack on Benghazi was an organized or spontaneous incident.

The U.S. and Libyan officials are continuing to probe the exact nature of the attack, including possible connections with a regional al Qaeda group.

The protests against the video in Cairo were followed by violence against U.S. facilities last week in several countries in North Africa, the Middle East and beyond, posing a foreign-relations challenge for the Obama administration in a sensitive region.

Ms. Rice told "Fox News Sunday" that the protests weren't an "expression of hostility in the broadest sense to the U.S. or its policies," but rather were a reaction to the video negatively depicting the Muslim faith. She said that it was difficult to "project the trajectory" of how the reaction of protesters around the region would develop.

Mr. Rogers, the GOP lawmaker, said on Fox he thought the protests were a reaction to U.S. policy in the region. He said there are many people living in the Mideast who are unclear what the overall American policy toward the region is.

President Barack Obama's handling of the turmoil could affect his political standing in the U.S. as he seeks re-election in November.

In appearances on several Sunday talk shows, Ms. Rice described Mr. Obama as "incredibly calm, incredibly steady, and incredibly measured" through the crisis. She said his leadership has "ensured that in Egypt, in Yemen, in Tunisia, in Libya, and many other parts of the world, that leaders have come out and made very plain that there's no excuse for this violence."

She dismissed suggestions that the U.S. has become less effective or popular in the region. "We're not impotent," she said in response to a question on "This Week." "We're not even less popular."

She acknowledged on "This Week" that U.S. security at the Benghazi facility "obviously didn't prove sufficient" to withstand the attack.

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U.S. downplays terror role in Libya riot

September 17, 2012

UPI

WASHINGTON -- A top U.S. diplomat said Sunday there was no evidence to suggest the protest that led to the sacking of a U.S. consulate in Libya was part of a terrorist plot.

Susan Rice, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said the preliminary investigation into the deadly demonstration in Benghazi found that armed extremists took advantage of the uproar in the streets.

"It seems to have been hijacked, let us say, by some individual clusters of extremists who came with heavier weapons, weapons that as you know in -- in the wake of the revolution in Libya ... are quite common and accessible," Rice said on ABC's "This Week." "And it then evolved from there."

What evolved was a breaching of the consulate perimeter and the death of U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. The incident appeared to spawn additional anti-American protests around the Arab world and election-year sparring between Republican and Democratic leaders of the Obama administration's actions in the region.

Rice said on CNN's "State of the Union" the attack should not be viewed from the United States as typical of Libya. "I have been to Libya and walked the streets of Benghazi myself," she said. "Despite what we saw in that horrific incident where some mob was hijacked ultimately by a handful of extremists, the United States is extremely popular. The outpouring of sympathy and support for Ambassador Stevens and his colleagues from the government, from people is evidence of that."

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., said CBS' "Face the Nation" the administration was naïve to think the Benghazi violence was not the work of al-Qaida or other violent extremists. "Most people don't bring rocket-propelled grenades and heavy weapons to a demonstration," McCain said. "That was an act of terror. For anyone to disagree with that fundamental fact I think is really ignoring the facts."

McCain said he did not dispute the assumption the United States was popular among most Libyans, but he said those that did not share that sentiment were being emboldened by a seeming weakness from the United States. "It was Osama bin Laden who said when people see the strong horse and the weak horse, people like the strong horse," McCain said. "Right now, the United States is the weak horse."

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said a seeming U.S. disengagement was also emboldening Iran into pressing forward with developing nuclear weapons. He said the United States needed to stop being preoccupied with the election year and step up to the plate to head off a potential crisis.

"I think you should have a red line communicated to Iran," Netanyahu said. "I know that people value flexibility. I think that's important. But I think at this late stage of the game, I think Iran needs to see clarity."

Rice responded the United States had indeed drawn a red line in the sand on Iran and that President Obama had not discounted bringing the U.S. military into the equation. "All options remain on the table," she said on "Fox News Sunday." "The president has been very clear about that and that includes the military option. This is not a policy of containment, it's a policy to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon."

Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., said on NBC's "Meet the Press" the Obama administration was contributing to the problem with its rush to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan and the wide berth it was giving the "Arab Spring" movement. "What he is doing by that is telling our allies they can't trust us and he's also telling unaligned that the U.S. is not a reliable ally," said King.

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Libyan president says U.S. consulate attack was premeditated; U.S. Ambassador Rice says it began spontaneously

September 17, 2012

[Washington Post](#)

By Sean Sullivan

Libyan President Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf said he is convinced a Tuesday attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi that left four Americans dead was premeditated, but the U.S. ambassador to the

United Nations said Sunday that the protests near the consulate began spontaneously, but were later hijacked by armed extremists.

"The way these perpetrators acted, and moved ... and they're choosing the specific date for this so-called demonstration, I think we have no, this leaves us with no doubt that this was preplanned, determined...predetermined," Magariaf said in an interview on CBS's "Face The Nation" set to air later Sunday morning.

The attack claimed the life of U.S. Ambassador to Libya J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans. The FBI has is conducting an investigation into the events surrounding the incident.

"What this began as was a spontaneous, not a premeditated response to what happened in Cairo," Susan Rice, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, said in an interview on ABC's "This Week With George Stephanopoulos."

Hours before the attack in Benghazi, protesters moved against the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, scaling the embassy walls and entering its outer grounds. The protests were an apparent reaction to an anti-Islam film linked to a California man.

"We believe that folks in Benghazi, a small number of people came to the embassy to — or to the consulate, rather, to replicate the sort of challenge that was posed in Cairo," Rice said. "And then as that unfolded, it seems to have been hijacked, let us say, by some individual clusters of extremists who came with heavier weapons."

"We do not have information at present that leads us to conclude that this was premeditated or preplanned," Rice said on CBS.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), also speaking on CBS, appeared to disagree with the suggestion that the attack was spontaneous. "Most people don't bring rocket propelled grenades and heavy weapons to a demonstration. That was an act of terror, and for anyone to disagree with that fundamental fact, I think is really ignoring of the facts," said McCain, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

House Intelligence Committee Mike Rogers (Mich.) echoed a similar sentiment on "Fox News Sunday." He said: "I'm just suspect that they could come to that conclusion so assuredly — that it was a spontaneous effort, given the coordination of it."

When asked whether it is safe for FBI investigators from the United States to come into the country, or if he is advising them to stay away for a while, Magariaf responded: "Maybe it is better for them to stay for a little while, for a little while. But until we ... we do what we have to do ourselves. But again when we need for their presence to help in further investigation ... and any hasty action I think is not welcome," Magariaf said.

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US, Libya Differ On Accounts Of Benghazi Attack

September 17, 2012

AFP

By Andrew Gully

WASHINGTON - Top US and Libyan officials offered starkly different accounts Sunday about the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi that left the ambassador and three other Americans dead.

The US ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, said it began with a spontaneous protest over the anti-Islamic video that had already set off similar protests in Egypt, leading to the storming of the US embassy there.

"People gathered outside the embassy (consulate) and then it grew very violent and those with extremist ties joined the fray and came with heavy weapons... and that then spun out of control," Rice told "Fox News Sunday."

"But we don't see at this point signs this was a coordinated plan, premeditated attack. Obviously, we will wait for the results of the (FBI) investigation and we don't want to jump to conclusions before then."

Announcing the arrest of 50 suspects, Libya's parliament chief, however, blamed the attack on a few foreign extremists who he said entered Libya from Mali and Algeria and pre-planned it with local "affiliates and sympathizers."

"The way these perpetrators acted, and moved... leaves us with no doubt that this was pre-planned, determined, predetermined," Mohammed al-Megaryef, president of the Libyan National Congress, told CBS News.

"It was planned, definitely, it was planned by foreigners, by people who entered the country a few months ago. And they were planning this criminal act since their arrival."

Ambassador Chris Stevens is believed to have died from smoke inhalation after becoming trapped in the blazing diplomatic compound, which came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and small arms for several hours.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula said the attack was revenge for the killing of the terror network's deputy leader Sheikh Abu Yahya al-Libi in a drone strike in June, but there is no evidence to support the claim.

US officials initially leaned toward the premeditated, well-planned assault angle and pointed to the fact the attack came on the anniversary of 9/11.

Now they are more reticent, insisting journalists wait for the results of the FBI investigation before leaping to conclusions.

Rice's comments are the strongest indication yet that -- even if the United States does believe the assault was the work of a small band of extremists -- it has no evidence to suggest planning prior to the protests.

Leading Republican senator and top Obama administration critic John McCain said it was ridiculous to believe it was anything other than a planned assault by Islamic extremists.

"Most people don't bring rocket-propelled grenades and heavy weapons to a demonstration," McCain told CBS. "That was an act of terror. And for anyone to disagree with that fundamental fact I think is really ignoring the facts."

The reluctance of US officials to give details about the Libya probe betrays their determination to track down those who killed Stevens, the first American envoy killed in the line of duty since 1979.

US spies, Marines and drones are aiding the Libyan authorities in their effort, hampered by the chaotic blend of competing militia and tribal alliances in the wake of the revolution that ousted Moamer Kadhafi last year.

In Paris, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told French TV that the American ambassador died under "absolutely atrocious conditions," suggesting new details could soon emerge.

Speaking to ABC, Rice denied the United States was powerless to stop the anger spreading through the Muslim world at symbols of US influence, such as diplomatic missions, businesses and fast food restaurants.

Countering accusations from opposition Republicans that weak US leadership was emboldening the extremists, Rice said President Barack Obama had been extremely effective in getting Muslim leaders to protect US facilities and condemn the violence.

"What we've seen is that the president has been incredibly calm, incredibly steady, and incredibly measured in his approach to this set of developments," Rice said.

"His interventions, his leadership, has ensured that in Egypt, in Yemen, in Tunisia, in Libya, and many other parts of the world, that leaders have come out and made very plain that there's no excuse for this violence."

The flare-up was not a sign of anti-US sentiment but triggered solely by a "reprehensible and disgusting" movie denigrating the Prophet Mohammed, Rice said, stressing: "We're not impotent, we're not even less popular."

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UN ambassador says Libya attack was spontaneous

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By JOSH LEDERMAN

WASHINGTON — A deadly assault on a U.S. consulate in Libya was a spontaneous reaction to an anti-Muslim video, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said Sunday, even as Libya's president insisted the attackers spent months preparing and carefully choosing their date — the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Unnerved by the rapidly escalating raid on Tuesday that claimed the life of the U.S. ambassador to Libya and three other Americans, the Obama administration last week launched an investigation into whether terrorist groups had exploited outrage over an anti-Muslim video to trigger an attack long in the works.

But Ambassador Susan Rice said evidence gathered so far shows no indication of a premeditated or coordinated strike. She said the attack in Benghazi, powered by mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, appeared to be a copycat of demonstrations that had erupted hours earlier outside the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, spurred by a YouTube film attributed to a California man mocking the Prophet Muhammad.

"It seems to have been hijacked, let us say, by some individual clusters of extremists who came with heavier weapons," Rice said, adding that such weaponry is easy to come by in post-revolutionary Libya.

Whether those extremists had ties to al-Qaida or other terrorist groups has yet to be determined, Rice said, noting that the FBI has yet to complete its investigation.

Rice's depiction of the chain of events contrasted with one offered by Libya's Interim President Mohammed el-Megarif, who said Sunday there was no doubt the perpetrators had predetermined the date of the attack.

"It was planned, definitely. It was planned by foreigners, by people who entered the country a few months ago," el-Megarif said. "And they were planning this criminal act since their arrival." Brushing aside el-Megarif's assessment, Rice said it wouldn't be the first time that Western works critical of Islam have triggered spontaneous unrest throughout the Middle East. She pointed to Salman Rushdie's novel "Satanic Verses" and cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad published by a Danish newspaper in 2006.

But Rep. Mike Rogers, the House Intelligence Committee chair, said it was premature to rule out a premeditated attack. A former FBI agent, Rogers, R-Mich., said there were too many coincidences to conclude the Benghazi attack hadn't been planned in advance.

"There's other information, classified information we have that just makes you stop for a minute and pause," Rogers said, without elaborating.

Added Arizona's Sen. John McCain, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee: "Most people don't bring rocket-propelled grenades and heavy weapons to a demonstration."

What started with protesters scaling the embassy wall in Cairo on Tuesday over an amateurish video deriding Islam's holiest figure has mushroomed into a maelstrom of disquiet throughout the Muslim world. In Libya, U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans were killed when protesters stormed the consulate in Benghazi. Anti-U.S. protests in 20 countries led the Pentagon to dispatch elite Marine anti-terrorism teams to Libya and Yemen and to position two Navy warships off Libya's coast.

Meanwhile, the State Department ordered all nonessential U.S. government workers and their families out of Sudan and Tunisia. In Lebanon, protesters torched an American fast-food restaurant. Even as tensions appeared to be easing Saturday, al-Qaida's most active Mideast branch was calling for further attacks on U.S. embassies.

"It's approximately a reaction to this video, and it's a hateful video that had nothing to do with the United States and which we find disgusting and reprehensible," Rice said.

Rice's comments appeared to mark a departure from an earlier State Department position. Citing the ongoing FBI probe, State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said Friday that until the Justice Department was ready to talk, no details would be released. "Not who they were, not how they happened, not what happened to Ambassador Stevens — not any of it."

But the uncertainty of an anxious nation questioning what was gained by U.S. support for democratic, pro-Islamic uprisings in Muslim countries has created a sense of urgency that has been difficult for the Obama administration to ignore. The turbulence has also become a major issue in President Barack Obama's re-election campaign, with the Republican rival for the White House, Mitt Romney, laying blame on the president and accusing him of apologizing for the U.S. Doubts also persist about whether security measures in place to protect U.S. diplomatic missions, which were overwhelmed in Benghazi, were sufficient.

Rice said the U.S. had "no actionable intelligence" about any imminent attack in Benghazi, and that security was beefed up in Cairo following signs that the YouTube video might spark protests. She said foreign governments are stepping up to condemn the violence and to fulfill their obligations to protect U.S. embassies.

Rice said it's too early to judge whether security should have been stronger in Libya. U.S. Marines, who commonly protect embassies abroad, were not assigned to the Benghazi consulate, the State Department has said. At the embassy in Cairo, Rice said, protections initially afforded by the Egyptian government fell short.

"When President Obama picked up the phone and spoke to the President (Mohammed) Morsi, right away things changed," Rice said. "And that's an evidence of our influence and our impact."

Rice and Rogers spoke on "Fox News Sunday," while el-Megarif and McCain spoke on CBS' "Face the Nation." Rice also appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press" and on "Face the Nation."
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Video Shows Libyans Retrieving Envoy's Body

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By David D. Kirkpatrick

CAIRO - An amateur video that surfaced Sunday appears to show a crowd removing the motionless body of Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens from a window of the American mission in Benghazi, Libya, after it was attacked last week by Islamist militants, adding new details to reports that Mr. Stevens had died of smoke inhalation while locked in a safe room.

The video emerged as a new disagreement broke out between the recently named president of the Libyan Parliament and American officials over whether the attack was planned and whether Al Qaeda had a role.

Labeled the work of Fahd al-Bakkosh, the video centers on what appears to be the same tall, narrow window that witnesses have described as Mr. Stevens's last exit. The witnesses said residents drawn to the scene had forced open the window and found Mr. Stevens behind a locked iron gate, pulled him out and taken him to the hospital. In the video, none say anything that shows ill will.

"I swear, he's dead," one Libyan says, peering in.

"Bring him out, man! Bring him out," another says.

"The man is alive. Move out of the way," others shout. "Just bring him out, man."

"Move, move, he is still alive!"

"Alive, Alive! God is great," the crowd erupts, while someone calls to bring Mr. Stevens to a car.

Mr. Stevens was taken to a hospital, where a doctor tried to revive him, but said he was all but dead on arrival.

The full identity and motivation of the attackers remains a matter of dispute. Considerable suspicion has fallen on a local Benghazi militia, Ansar al-Sharia, known for its intensely conservative and anti-democratic Islamist politics. Witnesses saw the group's insignia on trucks at the scene, and attackers acknowledged they were members. Fighters and others present at the attack said the motive was anger at a video produced in the United States that denigrates the Prophet Muhammad.

On Sunday, Mohamed Yussef Magariaf, president of Libya's newly elected national congress, said in interviews with American news media that he believed people affiliated with or sympathetic to Al Qaeda played a role in the assault, although he did not seem to rule out that the attackers might have been ideological allies of Al Qaeda without specific collaboration. The regional Qaeda affiliate, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, is active near Libya but has focused primarily on attacking local governments.

Mr. Magariaf said that Libya has arrested as many as 50 people over the assault. At least a few, he said, had come from outside Libya, possibly Algeria or Mali. And he also said that he believed the non-Libyans had been involved in planning the attack in the months since they entered the country, and that it was meant to coincide with the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Referring to "ugly deeds, criminal deeds," Mr. Magariaf insisted that the attacks "do not resemble any way, in any sense, the aspirations, the feelings of Libyans towards the United States and its citizens," emphasizing the role of "foreigners."

Appearing on the same program, Susan Rice, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, said the attacks began "spontaneously in Benghazi as a reaction to what had transpired some hours earlier in Cairo."

"But soon after that spontaneous protest began outside of our consulate in Benghazi, we believe that it looks like extremist elements, individuals, joined in that effort with heavy weapons of the sort that are, unfortunately, readily now available in Libya post-revolution," Ms. Rice said. "And that it spun from there into something much, much more violent."

The United States did not believe the attack was preplanned or premeditated, Ms. Rice said, adding that whether the extremists "were Al Qaeda affiliates, whether they were Libyan-based extremists or Al Qaeda itself I think is one of the things we'll have to determine."

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Libya Arrests 50 Over US Envoy Killing

September 17, 2012

AFP

By Imed Lamloum

TRIPOLI - Libya announced the arrest of 50 suspects over the killing of the US envoy and three other Americans, blaming the Benghazi attack on foreign extremists and claiming it was pre-planned.

Defence Secretary Leon Panetta said the US military did not plan to bolster its forces in the Middle East and North Africa, despite the threat of more violent protests targeting diplomatic outposts across the region.

The specter of renewed unrest after a relatively peaceful weekend grew with Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah calling for a week of protests across Lebanon over the anti-Islamic Internet video stirring up anger in the Muslim world.

"The whole world needs to see your anger on your faces, in your fists and your shouts," Nasrallah, the head of Lebanon's powerful Shiite Muslim organisation, said in a televised speech.

He spoke hours after Pope Benedict XVI left Lebanon following a historic three-day visit in which he prayed that Middle East leaders would work towards peace and reconciliation.

A low-budget trailer for a movie entitled "Innocence of Muslims," believed to have been produced by a small group of extremist Christians in the United States, has sparked furious anti-American protests across the Islamic world.

The first unrest was in Cairo, where protesters -- reportedly stirred up by clips of the film presented on satellite TV channels and seen on YouTube -- stormed the US embassy on Tuesday night, replacing the Stars and Stripes with an Islamic banner.

Hours later, the US consulate in Libya's eastern city of Benghazi came under sustained attack during more protests against the film -- four Americans, including ambassador Chris Stevens, were killed in the assault.

Announcing the arrest of 50 suspects, Libya's parliament chief blamed the attack on a few foreign extremists who he said entered Libya from Mali and Algeria and pre-planned it with local "affiliates and sympathizers."

"It was planned, definitely, it was planned by foreigners, by people who entered the country a few months ago," Mohammed al-Megaryef, president of the Libyan National Congress, told US broadcaster CBS television's "Face the Nation."

Stevens is believed to have died from smoke inhalation after becoming trapped in the blazing diplomatic compound, which came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades, mortars and small arms for several hours.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice offered a different account of the Benghazi assault, saying it began with a "spontaneous" protest over the film and that there was no evidence of pre-planning.

Countering accusations of US impotence over the crisis, Rice said President Barack Obama had been extremely effective in getting Muslim leaders to protect US diplomatic facilities and condemn the violence.

"What we've seen is that the president has been incredibly calm, incredibly steady and incredibly measured in his approach to this set of developments," Rice said.

"His interventions, his leadership, has ensured that in Egypt, in Yemen, in Tunisia, in Libya and many other parts of the world, that leaders have come out and made very plain that there's no excuse for this violence."

Since the Benghazi consulate attack, the United States has deployed counterterrorism Marine units to Libya to protect the Tripoli embassy and stationed two destroyers off the North African coast.

It has also sent a Marine unit to protect the US embassy in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, where police shot dead four protesters and wounded 34 others on Thursday as a mob stormed the facility and breached its perimeter.

The United States has evacuated all non-essential staff and family members from Sudan and Tunisia and warned US citizens against travel to the two countries.

With a substantial force already deployed in the region and now boosted by extra Marine units, Panetta said the US military had the ability to respond as necessary to protect American diplomats.

"We do have a major presence in the region," he told reporters.

"Having said that, we've enhanced that with FAST (Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team) teams and others so that if they are requested, they can respond more quickly."

Protests targeting symbols of US influence, ranging from embassies and schools to fast food outlets erupted again on Sunday, with thousands rallying across Pakistan, burning American flags and effigies of Obama. At least eight people were injured when protesters clashed with police outside the US consulate in the port of Karachi.

Hundreds of students poured onto the streets of Kabul shouting anti-American slogans, while the Bangladesh government condemned the film as "reprehensible" and New Delhi called it "offensive."

Belgian police said they detained 230 people in the northern city of Antwerp after clashes at a demonstration against the film.

In Afghanistan, heavily armed Taliban fighters on Friday stormed a strongly fortified air base in Helmand province where Britain's Prince Harry is deployed, killing two US Marines in an assault the militia said was to avenge the anti-Islam video.

A NATO spokesman revealed that six US fighter jets and three refuelling stations were destroyed and six aircraft hangars damaged in the attack, the scale of which he said was unprecedented.

A total of 17 people have died in violence linked to the film, including the four Americans killed in Benghazi, 11 protesters who died as police battled to defend US missions from mobs in Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen, and the two US soldiers in Afghanistan.

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TOP STORIES

Audacious Raid on NATO Base Shows Taliban's Reach

September 17, 2012

[New York Times](#)

By ALISSA J. RUBIN

KABUL, Afghanistan — An audacious Taliban attack on a heavily fortified base in southern Afghanistan did far more damage than initially reported, destroying or severely damaging eight attack jets in the most destructive single strike on Western matériel in the 11-year war, military officials said Sunday.

While other attacks have caused greater loss of life, the assault late Friday at Camp Bastion in Helmand Province, one of the largest and best-defended posts in Afghanistan, was troubling to NATO because the attackers were able to penetrate the base, killing two Marines and causing more than \$200 million in damage. "We're saying it's a very sophisticated attack," said a military official here. "We've lost aircraft in battle, but nothing like this."

The complex attack, which NATO officials said was conducted by three tightly choreographed teams of militants wearing American Army uniforms, was a reminder that the Taliban remain capable of serious assaults despite the "surge" offensive against them. Now the offensive is over, and nearly 10,000 American Marines have left Helmand Province, a critical stronghold for the Taliban, over the past several months.

Together with a rash of attacks by Afghan security forces against NATO troops — including two over the weekend that left at least six coalition service members dead — the Taliban have put new pressure on the American withdrawal plan, which calls for accelerated troop pullouts through 2014 while training Afghan forces to take over.

At the same time, tensions with the government flared Sunday as President Hamid Karzai condemned the deaths of Afghan women in airstrikes and criticized the continued American custody of hundreds of Afghan prisoners.

The military investigation into the attack at Bastion is now trying to uncover whether the insurgents had help from inside the camp and whether they were trained or aided by neighboring countries, such as Pakistan or Iran, which have allowed the Taliban to take refuge on their territory. But military officials and Afghan analysts said that the insurgents may well have prepared for their mission in significant measure by studying easily available satellite images on the Internet. "We don't underestimate the enemy," the military official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the continuing investigation. "We know the enemy has limited capability to do these, but they are not a whole bunch of yokels running around the country."

The 15 insurgents conducting the attack lost no time from the moment they blew a hole in the perimeter at one of the closest points to the airfield, military officials said. They then raced toward their targets, shooting and setting fire to parked Navy AV-8B Harrier jets and destroying three refueling stations, even as a quick reaction force was mustering to fight them off, a military official said. "It was a

running gun battle for a while, two and a half hours, nonetheless they were able to get to the aircraft before we could intercept them," a military official said, noting that because it happened at night it was difficult until daylight to be sure that all the insurgents had been killed or captured. All but one was killed; the remaining insurgent is in custody, the military said.

Two American Marines were killed in the attack, and nine coalition personnel, including a civilian contractor, were wounded, the military said in a statement. Prince Harry, the third in line to the British throne, is doing a tour of duty as a helicopter pilot and was stationed at Camp Bastion at the time of the attack, but was not hurt. Camp Bastion is home mostly to British soldiers, while the neighboring camp, known as Leatherneck, has American Marines and other service members.

Six of the jets, which each cost between \$23 million and \$30 million when they were first acquired by the United States Navy, according to a General Accounting Office report, were completely destroyed and two more were so severely damaged it was unlikely they could be repaired. Also badly damaged were three refueling stations and three soft-skinned aircraft hangars, the military said in a news release.

Determining how it was possible for the insurgents to penetrate and severely damage such a well-defended base, particularly one with clear lines of sight across miles of mostly flat plain, will be important in determining whether this was a unique attack or one that could be replicated either in targeting Western bases or Afghan ones, military experts said.

"The Taliban retain the command and military planning infrastructure to put together complex and sophisticated attacks," said Stephen Biddle, a professor at George Washington University with expertise in defense studies.

"If this is a clever surprise, it can't work twice; it tells you the people are clever and can do elaborate planning, using subterfuge and possibly captured uniforms," Mr. Biddle said. "It would be a different matter if they managed to blow a hole in a heavily defended perimeter — then the Afghan National Security Forces are looking at a big, big problem."

Wahid Mujda, an Afghan analyst who tracks the Taliban, said that despite the Taliban's statement that the attack was retaliation for an anti-Muslim video, the video almost certainly had nothing to do with it.

"I do not think that the Camp Bastion attack had anything to do with the anti-Prophet movie," Mr. Mujda said. "Given the sophistication of the attack one can say with a lot of confidence that the Taliban had been training, rehearsing and preparing for weeks and even months. Everything was not planned and decided overnight."

He predicted that the Afghan government and the international military forces here would see similar attacks in the future.

"They have experts, strategists, planners and designers, they have a great knowledge of the modern technology," Mr. Mujda said.

"My sources in the Taliban tell me that every time they want to attack an important target they use Google Maps and other available means for studying and understanding their targets."

This year's toll from what are known as insider or green-on-blue attacks — green being American military parance for indigenous forces, blue for its own — has become one of the most visible signs of the challenges faced by the NATO-led coalition as it nears the end of its role in Afghanistan's war.

The second attack of the weekend, which was Sunday in Zabul Province, was the deadlier of the two latest incidents, with four coalition service members killed. The coalition said in a terse statement that the attack was "suspected to involve members of the Afghan police" and was under investigation.

Michael Cole, a coalition spokesman, said officials suspected the Afghan police in the attack because a police officer was killed in the firefight that ensued. But Mr. Cole said investigators were not yet certain whether the dead officer was one of the attackers or was caught in the cross-fire.

Afghan officials said they, too, were investigating.

The six deaths brought to 51 the number of coalition service members killed this year in insider attacks. The toll has already well exceeded last year's total of 35 killed in such violence.

The increase in attacks has prompted coalition and Afghan officials to step up their vetting of Afghan recruits, and coalition officials say the attacks are mostly driven by personal animosity. Still, at least a quarter are believed to be the result of Taliban infiltration or influence over soldiers and the police.

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Cultural Clash Fuels Muslims Raging at Film

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

CAIRO — Stepping from the cloud of tear gas in front of the American Embassy here, Khaled Ali repeated the urgent question that he said justified last week's violent protests at United States outposts around the Muslim world.

"We never insult any prophet — not Moses, not Jesus — so why can't we demand that Muhammad be respected?" Mr. Ali, a 39-year-old textile worker said, holding up a handwritten sign in English that read "Shut Up America." "Obama is the president, so he should have to apologize!"

When the protests against an American-made online video mocking the Prophet Muhammad exploded in about 20 countries, the source of the rage was more than just religious sensitivity, political demagogy or resentment of Washington, protesters and their sympathizers here said. It was also a demand that many of them described with the word "freedom," although in a context very different from the term's use in the individualistic West: the right of a community, whether Muslim, Christian or Jewish, to be free from grave insult to its identity and values.

That demand, in turn, was swept up in the colliding crosscurrents of regional politics. From one side came the gale of anger at America's decade-old war against terrorism, which in the eyes of many Muslims in the region often looks like a war against them. And from the other, the new winds blowing through the region in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, which to many here means most of all a right to demand respect for the popular will.

"We want these countries to understand that they need to take into consideration the people, and not just the governments," said Ismail Mohamed, 42, a religious scholar who once was an imam in Germany. "We don't think that depictions of the prophets are freedom of expression. We think it is an offense against our rights," he said, adding, "The West has to understand the ideology of the people."

Even during the protests, some stone throwers stressed that the clash was not Muslim against Christian. Instead, they suggested that the traditionalism of people of both faiths in the region conflicted with Western individualism and secularism.

Youssef Sidhom, the editor of the Coptic Christian newspaper Watani, said he objected only to the violence of the protests.

Mr. Sidhom approvingly recalled the uproar among Egyptian Christians that greeted the 2006 film "The Da Vinci Code," which was seen as an affront to aspects of traditional Christianity and the persona of Jesus. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and other Arab countries banned both the film and the book on which it was based. And in Egypt, where insulting any of the three Abrahamic religions is a crime, the police even arrested the head of a local film company for importing 2,000 copies of the DVD, according to news reports.

"This reaction is expected," Mr. Sidhom said of last week's protests, "and if it had stayed peaceful I would have said I supported it and understood."

In a context where insults to religion are crimes and the state has tightly controlled almost all media, many in Egypt, like other Arab countries, sometimes find it hard to understand that the American government feels limited by its free speech rules from silencing even the most noxious religious bigot.

In his statement after protesters breached the walls of the United States Embassy last Tuesday, the spiritual leader of the Egypt's mainstream Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood, declared that "the West" had imposed laws against "those who deny or express dissident views on the Holocaust or question the number of Jews killed by Hitler, a topic which is purely historical, not a sacred doctrine."

In fact, denying the Holocaust is also protected as free speech in the United States, although it is prohibited in Germany and a few other European countries. But the belief that it is illegal in the United States is widespread in Egypt, and the Brotherhood's spiritual leader, Mohamed Badie, called for the "criminalizing of assaults on the sanctities of all heavenly religions."

"Otherwise, such acts will continue to cause devout Muslims across the world to suspect and even loathe the West, especially the U.S.A., for allowing their citizens to violate the sanctity of what they hold dear and holy," he said. "Certainly, such attacks against sanctities do not fall under the freedom of opinion or thought."

Several protesters said during the heat of last week's battles here that they were astonished that the United States had not punished the filmmakers. "Everyone across all these countries has the same anger, they are rising up for the same reason and with the same demands, and still no action is taken against the people who made that film," said Zakaria Magdy, 23, a printer.

In the West, many may express astonishment that the murder of Muslims in hate crimes does not provoke the same level of global outrage as the video did. But even a day after the clashes in Cairo had

subsided, many Egyptians argued that a slur against their faith was a greater offense than any attack on a living person.

"When you hurt someone, you are just hurting one person," said Ahmed Shobaky, 42, a jeweler. "But when you insult a faith like that, you are insulting a whole nation that feels the pain."

Mr. Mohamed, the religious scholar, justified it this way: "Our prophet is more dear to us than our family and our nation."

Others said that the outpouring of outrage against the video had built up over a long period of perceived denigrations of Muslims and their faith by the United States or its military, which are detailed extensively in the Arab news media: the invasion of Iraq on a discredited pretext; the images of abuse from the Abu Ghraib prison; the burning or desecrations of the Koran by troops in Afghanistan and a pastor in Florida; detentions without trial at Guantánamo Bay; the denials of visas to prominent Muslim intellectuals; the deaths of Muslim civilians as collateral damage in drone strikes; even political campaigns against the specter of Islamic law inside the United States.

"This is not the first time that Muslim beliefs are being insulted or Muslims humiliated," said Emad Shahin, a political scientist at the American University in Cairo.

While he stressed that no one should ever condone violence against diplomats or embassies because of even the most offensive film, Mr. Shahin said it was easy to see why the protesters focused on the United States government's outposts. "There is a war going on here," he said. "This was a straw, if you will, that broke the camel's back.

"The message here is we don't care about your beliefs — that because of our freedom of expression we can demean them and degrade them any time, and we do not care about your feelings."

There are also purely local dynamics that can fan the flames. In Tunis, an American school was set on fire by protesters angry over the video — but then looted of computers and musical instruments by people in the neighborhood.

Here in Cairo, ultraconservative Islamists known as Salafis initially helped drum up outrage against the video and rally their supporters to protest outside the embassy. But by the time darkness fell and a handful of young men climbed the embassy wall, the Salafis were nowhere to be found, and they stayed away the rest of the week.

Egyptian officials said that some non-Salafis involved in the embassy attacks confessed to receiving payments, although no payer had been identified. But after the first afternoon, the next three days of protests were dominated by a relatively small number of teenagers and young men — including die-hard soccer fans known as ultras. They appeared to have been motivated mainly by the opportunity to attack the police, whom they revile.

Some commentators said they regretted that the violence here and around the region had overshadowed the underlying argument against the offensive video. "Our performance came out like that of a failed lawyer in a no-lose case," Wael Kandil, an editor of the newspaper Sharouq, wrote in a column on Sunday. "We served our opponents something that made them drop the main issue and take us to the margins — this is what we accomplished with our bad performance."

Mohamed Sabry, 29, a sculptor and art teacher at a downtown cafe, said he saw a darker picture. "To see the Islamic world in this condition of underdevelopment," he said, "this is a bigger insult to the prophet."

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As Scandal Shook China, Quiet Spy Game Unraveled

September 17, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By JEREMY PAGE

BEIJING—In spy-speak it is known as a "walk-in"—an unsolicited approach to a diplomatic mission by a foreigner claiming to have sensitive information. And when an agitated former police chief, Wang Lijun, entered a U.S. consulate in early February with an eye-popping tale about the death of a British citizen, the stakes could hardly have been higher.

As Chinese police cars surrounded the building, Mr. Wang slipped U.S. diplomats the cellphone number of an accomplice, according to several people familiar with what happened. It would lead to evidence, he said, implicating the wife of Bo Xilai, one of the most senior leaders in the Chinese Communist Party, in the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood.

During a 30-hour standoff, U.S. officials weighed the information he claimed to have against the damage that granting him asylum could do to U.S.-Chinese relations. In the end, diplomats said Mr. Wang didn't formally seek asylum, and he left the consulate and was taken into Chinese custody.

But the drama didn't end there. In a previously undisclosed development, the U.S. handed the cellphone number over to British diplomats and gave them instructions on how to track down the information from Mr. Wang's mysterious accomplice. The instructions included setting up an email account under a designated name with a popular Chinese email and messaging service. The British set up the account and texted the cellphone number. People involved gave conflicting accounts of the timing and whether the accomplice responded. For reasons that are unclear, the British never received the promised documents.

On Tuesday, Mr. Wang will stand trial in the city of Chengdu on charges of defection, abuse of power, bribery and "bending the law for selfish ends," according to an official at the trial court. An indictment accuses Mr. Wang, the former police chief of Chongqing, of shielding Mr. Bo's wife from a criminal investigation, taking "massive" bribes and illegally using surveillance technology, according to state media.

The revelation that he claimed to have an accomplice who may still be prepared to spill secrets could complicate China's efforts to dictate the narrative about Messrs. Wang and Bo. The new details about Mr. Wang's stay in the consulate and its aftermath also shed light on how U.S. and British authorities responded to the unusual episode that triggered China's worst political crisis in more than two decades. Mr. Wang was a potentially valuable intelligence source with inside knowledge about senior Chinese leaders, but also was someone accused by human-rights activists and legal experts of widespread abuse of police powers.

The accounts of Britain's actions raise questions about whether it could have acted faster to procure the documents from Mr. Wang's associate. In the U.S., some politicians initially questioned the Obama administration's decision not to treat Mr. Wang as a valuable intelligence source and candidate for asylum.

Lawyers and Communist Party insiders say Mr. Wang almost certainly will be found guilty and given a stiff sentence, potentially the death penalty. Mr. Bo's wife, Gu Kailai, was given a suspended death sentence after her Aug. 20 conviction for Mr. Heywood's murder, which means she could spend life in prison.

Mr. Wang's trial is expected to produce the first official account of his flight to the consulate, which triggered a series of events that have thrown Chinese politics into disarray in advance of a once-a-decade leadership change expected this fall. Communist Party leaders see the trial as a next step in their efforts to limit the scandal. Soon after it ends, China likely will announce whether Mr. Bo—a former political highflier who was sacked from his party posts and placed under investigation in April—will face criminal charges, according to party insiders, political analysts and diplomats.

But the story prosecutors present is unlikely to address many of the unanswered questions about the episode, such as what other secrets Mr. Wang knew about Mr. Bo and what prompted his flight to the consulate.

That means it is unlikely to convince domestic skeptics, especially China's microbloggers, many of whom were deeply suspicious of the official story presented at Ms. Gu's trial. Many appear unsure about whether to view Mr. Wang as a hero or a villain.

"Wang Lijun did a lot of bad things, but he also saved China inadvertently," said Hu Xingdou, a popular microblogger and political economist at the Beijing Institute of Technology. "I don't think the authorities will fully explain what he did. But if they don't, that will only increase people's suspicions and lack of trust in the government."

The first sign of the brewing crisis in Chongqing came on Feb. 2 when a notice on the local government website announced that Mr. Wang had been replaced as police chief the previous day and given new responsibilities as vice mayor.

Soon afterward, he requested a meeting with the British consulate in Chongqing, but he failed to appear, according to people familiar with the episode.

Around the same time, he arranged a meeting at the U.S. consulate in Chengdu on the pretext that he wanted to discuss issues relating to his new post, people with knowledge of the meeting said. He drove the 200 miles from Chongqing to Chengdu and, on Feb. 6, approached the consulate, located in a leafy area of the city center surrounded by high walls:

U.S. diplomats, not realizing the political storm about to erupt, took him to the consulate's library rather than a safe room designed to block Chinese surveillance, according to people familiar with the events. Mr. Wang appeared agitated and fearful for his safety, but he didn't seem to have a preconceived plan, these people said. He told U.S. diplomats that he had fallen out with Mr. Bo, his boss in Chongqing, and gave them an account of the evidence against Ms. Gu, they said.

Among other evidence, Mr. Wang said he could provide a toxicology report proving that Mr. Heywood had ingested cyanide, although he said there were also traces of another poison that local authorities had been unable to identify. He also said that Ms. Gu had confessed to him that she murdered Mr. Heywood.

Early accounts from people briefed on the incident had suggested that Mr. Wang brought the evidence with him. But two people with more direct knowledge of the episode said more recently that he didn't have the documents with him.

At one point, Mr. Wang offered to bring in an associate who had documentary evidence, according to someone with direct knowledge of the incident, but that wasn't possible because the consulate was surrounded by Chinese police.

There are various theories about what motivated Mr. Wang to approach U.S. authorities.

One explanation from several people with close links to the party leadership is that well before Mr. Heywood's death, Mr. Wang was under investigation for alleged abuses of power in China's northeast and in Chongqing.

Some party insiders have said Mr. Wang was implicated in a corruption investigation into his successor as police chief of Tieling city in China's northeast, which was reported by state media in February. These people said Mr. Wang had been relying on political protection from Mr. Bo but became convinced his boss no longer was willing to shield him.

On or around Jan. 28, in an attempt to put pressure on Mr. Bo, Mr. Wang had confronted him over his wife's involvement in Mr. Heywood's murder, according to several people familiar with that incident. But Mr. Bo refused to give Mr. Wang what he wanted and replaced him as Chongqing's police chief three days later, they said.

Inside the U.S. consulate, Mr. Wang asked for shelter from Mr. Bo. Peter Haymond, the U.S. consul general in Chengdu, was out of town but hurried back. Stunned diplomats also informed the embassy in Beijing, which contacted the State Department in Washington. Members of the National Security Staff were informed, but President Barack Obama wasn't briefed while Mr. Wang was at the consulate, according to administration officials.

It was a tricky situation for U.S. diplomats. Although Mr. Wang was a potential fount of confidential information, he didn't necessarily qualify for asylum given the allegations of power and rights abuses that surrounded him. Moreover, offering him protection would have outraged the Chinese on the eve of a planned U.S. visit by Xi Jinping, the man expected to take over as China's top leader in the fall. U.S. government officials appear to have decided early on that he wasn't a sufficiently valuable intelligence asset to risk the political fallout, according to people familiar with the matter.

The U.S. officials explained to Mr. Wang that it wasn't possible to apply formally for asylum in the consulate, and that it would be extremely difficult to arrange his departure from China, according to people with knowledge of the events. After some discussion, Mr. Wang agreed that his best option was to hand himself to central-government authorities, who could protect him from Mr. Bo's security forces. Using three or more mobile phones he brought with him, Mr. Wang spent several hours negotiating with central authorities.

Mr. Wang agreed to be taken away by officials from the Ministry of State Security, who flew with him back to Beijing, where he has been kept at an undisclosed location for the past few months.

Before Mr. Wang left the consulate on Feb. 7, some 30 hours after he entered, U.S. officials briefed British diplomats on his allegations, according to people familiar with those discussions. The next day, the Americans gave the British the cellphone number and told them of the plan for obtaining documents from his associate via the email account.

British diplomats set up the email account and texted the mobile phone number with confirmation that the account was ready, according to two people familiar with the efforts, who gave differing accounts of the timing and whether there was a response.

One of the people said British diplomats texted and called several times starting Feb. 9, but never got an answer. Another said the British didn't set up the email account until later and did receive two text messages from the accomplice, which outlined Mr. Wang's allegations but contained no evidence.

A spokesman for the British Embassy said: "We made every effort to establish whether additional information existed."

William Hague, Britain's foreign secretary, has said he was informed about the matter on Feb. 7 and the British embassy first asked the Chinese government to investigate Mr. Heywood's death on Feb. 15.

Also on Feb. 15, a text message outlining Mr. Wang's allegations and using a Chinese approximation of Mr. Heywood's name was sent to Chinese journalist Chu Chaoxin, according to a message Mr. Chu posted on his microblog in March. Mr. Chu, who works for the Southern Weekend newspaper, said in his microblog posting that the message came from one of Wang Lijun's "one way communication" cellphone numbers. He didn't explain what that meant, and the posting was quickly deleted. He recently declined to comment.

Some party insiders, diplomats and political analysts believe Mr. Wang had laid plans for what would happen if Chinese authorities took him into custody. "I think it's clear that Wang was not working alone," said one Western official following the case.

On March 26, The Wall Street Journal was the first to report that the British government had asked Chinese authorities to investigate Mr. Heywood's death, and to describe his links to the Bo family as well as Mr. Wang's allegations.

During Ms. Gu's murder trial on Aug. 9, prosecutors alleged that she told Mr. Wang about her plan to kill Mr. Heywood, and she originally had schemed with Mr. Wang to have the Briton framed as a drug smuggler and shot dead resisting arrest, according to observers of the trial. Prosecutors said Mr. Wang backed out of that plan and Ms. Gu went ahead with her own scheme to poison Mr. Heywood, the observers said. Mr. Wang met Ms. Gu the day after the murder and secretly recorded her confessing, the observers quoted prosecutors as saying.

Ms. Gu didn't contest the charges against her, but her defense team sought to discredit Mr. Wang's testimony, according to the observers. "They really seemed to be trying very hard to undermine Wang Lijun," noted one.

Lawyers and political analysts say that doesn't bode well for Mr. Wang. But they say he should escape execution if he has provided evidence against others, possibly in relation to the crackdown on organized crime he oversaw, which critics say was used to seize assets from local entrepreneurs.

Wang Yuncai, a lawyer and old friend of Mr. Wang, said she was allowed to meet him in Chengdu last month but had no sense of what penalty he might face.

"It's hard to say if the situation is optimistic or not. There is simply no way to judge it," she said. As for his physical and emotional condition, she said, "it's very difficult to say whether it's good or not."

(top)

AFRICA

ECOWAS Defence Ministers Meet On Mali, G.Bissau: Official

September 17, 2012

AFP

LAGOS - West African defence and foreign ministers will hold an emergency meeting Monday in the Ivorian capital Abidjan on the political and security crises in Mali and Guinea Bissau, an official statement said.

The extraordinary meeting will consider reports presented by the president of the ECOWAS Commission, Desire Kadre Ouedraogo, on the political and security situations in the two countries, the ECOWAS statement said.

The foreign ministers of Burkina Faso and Nigeria will also brief the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council meeting on the mediation efforts in Mali and Guinea Bissau, respectively, it said.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is trying to broker an end to the political crises in Mali -- which has been effectively sliced in two after a putsch -- and in impoverished Guinea-Bissau, which suffered a coup in April.

Ivory Coast's Chief of Defence Staff, who is also the chairman of the Committee of the ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff, will also brief the Council on the outcome of the two-day committee meeting which ended on Saturday in Abidjan.

The defence chiefs have held several meetings as part of ECOWAS efforts towards the resolution of the crises in Mali and Guinea Bissau following the coups d'état which interrupted constitutional rule in both countries, and the separatist rebellion in northern Mali.

The Council's meeting comes in the wake of the formal request by the government of Mali for ECOWAS military assistance to recover the occupied territory in the north of the country and combat terrorism, the statement said.

ECOWAS has had 3,300 regional troops on standby for months but was awaiting a formal request from the Malian authorities to seek UN Security Council approval for a military deployment.

The country was considered one of the region's stable democracies until a March coup plunged it into turmoil.

Taking advantage of the chaos, Islamic extremists allied to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb seized key towns in the vast desert north, an area larger than France or Texas.

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Niger Islamic Council Urges Muslims Not To Use Violence To Protest Film

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

NIAMEY, Niger - The Islamic Council of Niger asks Muslims not to attack Christian churches to protest the recent film on the Prophet Muhammad.

In a speech on national television Sunday, condemned the film but urged Muslims to respond with "appeasement and tolerance, the cardinal virtues of Islam."

Niger's religious leader proposed the creation of a confederation that would include representatives of all religions to foster "dialogue ... and peaceful coexistence between religions."

In a separate development, Niger President Issoufou Mahamadou sent a condolence message to U.S. President Barack Obama in which he called "cowardly" the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, which resulted in the deaths of U.S. citizens including Ambassador Chris Stevens.

Issoufou said that "terrorism must be combated with the utmost vigour."

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South Africa Police Step Up Efforts Against Protesters

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By DEVON MAYLIE and PETER WONACOTT

JOHANNESBURG—One month after South African police killed protesters near a platinum mine in a clash that inflamed national tensions, police have stepped in again to try to end the turmoil in the country's mining sector.

On Sunday, police stopped hundreds of demonstrators employed at the world's largest platinum producer, Anglo American Platinum Ltd., [AMS.JO +1.32%](#) from marching to a police station in nearby Rustenburg to protest a security clampdown that began Friday. Meanwhile, at the third-biggest platinum miner, Lonmin LMI.LN [+0.73%](#) PLC, protesters used rocks and dirt mounds to block roads and prevent police from entering an informal settlement where strike leaders were hiding. At one point, nine police trucks attempted to dislodge the barriers before turning back.

The day before, police fired rubber bullets at protesters, raided homes of miners for weapons and arrested more than 38 people, according to a local police officer who was part of the operations. Those arrested were scheduled to appear Monday at a local Rustenburg court, he said.

The moves follow weeks of illegal strikes that have paralyzed platinum production in South Africa, which accounts for 80% of the metal's global output, and hit the country's major goldmines. The wildcat strikes erupted after police on Aug. 16 gunned down 34 people who refused to disperse during a wage protest at Lonmin's Marikana mine. In all, 45 people have died in the strike violence.

President Jacob Zuma has resisted calls to take disciplinary action against those involved in the police shootings before a judicial committee that he set up releases its findings. State prosecutors fueled a public outcry after they used an apartheid-era law to formally charge protesters with the murder of the 34 people that police shot, on the basis that they had incited the violence. Prosecutors later dropped the murder charges following the public uproar.

South Africa's police chief, Riah Phiyega, has defended her force, saying officers used appropriate measures to protect themselves against an armed assault.

But the Marikana incident has put a fresh spotlight on a chronic problem with policing and public order, says Gareth Newham, head of the Crime and Justice Program at the Institute of Security Studies, a Pretoria-based think tank. Either the police don't act quickly enough before situations go out of control, as in the case of the 2008 riots that targeted African migrants, or overzealous actions deepen conflicts, he says.

"Police are supposed to de-escalate violence," Mr. Newham says. "In the past few years, they've escalated conflicts."

The number of police-related deaths last year reached 797, more than double a decade earlier, according to figures from the Independent Police Investigative Directorate, a government arm that investigates potential criminal offenses by police. Between 1997 and 2010, 5,820 people died as a result of police action or during police custody, according to the IPID figures.

After the shootings at Marikana, police had played a largely passive role in trying to protect company property during protests, and allowed miners to march with makeshift weapons such as spears and machetes.

On Friday, the South African government signaled a shift. The country's justice minister, Jeff Radebe, told reporters that law-enforcement agencies won't tolerate individuals inciting violence and would arrest those engaged in illegal gatherings or carrying weapons. Mr. Radebe said the government is intervening now because the strikes have put South Africa's economy at risk.

But the stepped-up police action also carries political risks. One of President Zuma's chief critics, Julius Malema, a youth leader expelled from the ruling African National Congress, has sought to stir opposition to the government in the wake of Marikana shootings. He has called for a nationwide mining strike and for Mr. Zuma's resignation.

On Sunday, a spokesman for a special investigative police unit called the Hawks said Mr. Malema is being investigated for his alleged role in instigating violence at Lonmin. The investigation follows a complaint lodged by labor union Solidarity after Mr. Malema visited the mines and called for a national mine strike, according to the Hawks spokesman, MacIntosh Polela.

A spokesman for Mr. Malema described the charges as "intimidation" and said they wouldn't stop him from meeting with Marikana miners and their families on Monday.

As part of the government's renewed efforts to stop the protests, police barged into a hostel early Saturday morning where Lonmin workers stay, breaking windows and pointing guns at those asleep, the

workers said. Miners in a nearby informal settlement said police also started firing rubber bullets around women and children who weren't part of the protest.

A defense department spokesman said around 150 soldiers have been deployed in the area and are assisting police in their raids to contain those they believe to be leading the protests.

Behind the strikes are demands for higher wages by workers frustrated at the slow pace of change since the end of apartheid 18 years ago. Many workers have rejected representation of the National Union of Mineworkers, the country's biggest union and an ally of the ruling African National Congress. The upstart Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union has been actively recruiting, spurring intra-union clashes as the two unions battle for membership. Some miners also say they are striking on their own initiative, outside of all union leadership.

Anglo American said Sunday that it plans to reopen the mines Tuesday following the police efforts. "We ... commend the government and our key local stakeholders in helping to restore calm to the Rustenburg area," said Chris Griffith, the company's chief executive.

Lonmin has offered an increase far below the 12,500 rand (US\$1,522) a month that the miners are demanding. On Sunday, they said they cannot afford the miner's demands.

In an opinion piece in the local Sunday Times, Simon Scott, Lonmin's acting chief executive officer, called the deadly clash at Lonmin "a defining moment for South Africa," and said the miner was struggling with its responsibility to the community and the country as well as its shareholders who have invested in the shuttered mine. "After all the horrific violence at Marikana, it is essential that we move as quickly as possible into meaningful negotiations," he wrote.

(top)

ASIA

Beijing Mixes Messages Over Anti-Japan Protests

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Ian Johnson And Thom Shanker

BEIJING - Anti-Japanese demonstrators took to the streets again on Sunday in cities across China, with the government offering mixed signals on whether it would continue to tolerate the sometimes violent outbursts.

The protests were orderly in Beijing, with several hundred people circling in front of the Japanese Embassy demanding Chinese control over a small island group known as Senkaku in Japan and as Diaoyu in China. Protests were also reported in other cities, including Shanghai, Guangzhou and Qingdao.

On Saturday, protests occurred in more than 50 cities, with some violence reported. A factory for the Panasonic Corporation was set on fire in Qingdao, and a Toyota dealership was looted, according to photographs posted on social media sites and local residents reached by telephone.

"Across China, calls have grown for boycotts of Japanese products. Many Japanese retailers and restaurants have been forced to place signs in their windows supporting China, and on Sunday, Japan's prime minister, Yoshihiko Noda, asked China to protect Japanese and their property.

A signed editorial on the Web site of People's Daily, the authoritative Communist Party newspaper, said the protests should be viewed sympathetically. While it did not defend the violence, the editorial said the protests were a symbol of the Chinese people's patriotism.

"No one would doubt the pulses of patriotic fervor when the motherland is bullied," the editorial said. "No one would fail to understand the compatriots' hatred and fights when the country is provoked; because a people that has no guts and courage is doomed to be bullied, and a country that always hides low and bides its time will always come under attack."

Some articles in the Chinese news media, however, said the protests should be "rational" and peaceful.

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta is scheduled to visit Beijing on Monday, and some observers said the government might try to limit the protests.

Just before landing in Tokyo on Sunday, Mr. Panetta told correspondents aboard his jet that he was worried that territorial disputes in the Pacific raise "the possibility that a misjudgment on one side or the other could result in violence."

Mr. Panetta said the United States was not taking sides in any of the region's territorial disagreements, but advocated diplomacy to peacefully resolve them. One option, he said, would be for the feuding nations to follow a code of conduct advocated by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Both China and Japan claim the disputed islands, although Japan has controlled them for over a century. China increased its pressure on Japan after the Japanese government purchased the islands from private owners. Japan says the move was to prevent nationalists from using the islands, but China has seen it as a step to solidify Japanese control. In response, China dispatched surveillance ships to the waters near the islands.

Complicating the diplomatic dispute, Japan's newly appointed ambassador to China, Shinichi Nishimiya, died Sunday after falling ill last week in Tokyo, according to Japanese and Chinese news reports. He was appointed ambassador last week and was to assume his duties next month.

China's state-run news media has made repeated calls for the islands to be given to China, which claims that it controlled them before Japan's colonial expansion in the late 19th century. Both China and Japan are also involved in territorial disputes with other countries over separate island chains, some of which are thought to be surrounded by rich deposits of natural resources in the surrounding waters.

There was evidence on Sunday that some Chinese government officials were involved in the protests. In the western city of Xi'an, activists on the Internet identified one of the officials as the police chief.

The political analyst Li Weidong said the official tolerance fit a longstanding pattern of behavior in which the Chinese government uses mass protests to further its foreign policy goals. In a text message sent to friends and associates, Mr. Li compared the current protesters to the Boxers, a quasi-religious group that was used by the Qing dynasty to oppose foreign incursions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

"Beijing dares not to fight, but it's unable to talk it over either," Mr. Li wrote. "So it has to employ Boxers, using product boycott to press Japan."

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Anti-Japan Protests Mount in China

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By BRIAN SPEGELE in Beijing and TAKASHI NAKAMICHI in Tokyo

Angry crowds across China ransacked Japanese businesses, smashed Japanese cars and pelted Tokyo's embassy in Beijing with eggs and plastic bottles in weekend protests over disputed islands in the East China Sea.

Japan's prime minister, Yoshihiko Noda, deplored the violence as Japanese companies and residents braced for further demonstrations ahead of the anniversary on Tuesday of an event that precipitated Japan's conquest of parts of northeast China in 1931—an emotionally charged date that represents for many Chinese one of the blackest periods in their modern history.

Still, there were signs that neither Japan nor China wants an escalation of tensions that could damage wider economic relations. Mr. Noda, while insisting on Japan's sovereignty over the disputed islets, also called for "levelheadedness." The state-run Xinhua news agency said in a commentary Sunday that "wisdom is needed in the expression of patriotism."

The protests were sparked by a recent move by the Japanese government to buy the islands—known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China—from their private owners, who are Japanese.

An official at the Japanese Embassy in Beijing said they were the largest anti-Japanese demonstrations since 1972, when the two countries restored diplomatic ties. Attacks on Japanese factories and restaurants on Saturday were "more radical than anything seen" in the past, said the official, who declined to be identified.

Meanwhile, the Chinese foreign ministry said Sunday that China had submitted information to the United Nations arguing that its continental shelf in the East China Sea extends beyond the standard 200 miles (320 kilometers) granted under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea. The submission is part of efforts by Beijing to establish a legal basis for its claims over the islands.

On Saturday, thousands of demonstrators swarmed in front of the Japanese Embassy in central Beijing. "Smash Japanese imperialism," they chanted. Some sang the Chinese national anthem and held aloft portraits of Mao Zedong. As a police helicopter hovered overhead, young protesters climbed into trees outside the embassy's gates where they burned a Japanese flag to loud cheers.

Protests continued outside the embassy on Sunday, but riot police stood shoulder to shoulder outside the embassy's gates to stop demonstrators from approaching.

Elsewhere in China, protesters in the southern city of Guangzhou invaded the luxury Garden Hotel, which is attached to a building that houses a Japanese consulate. They smashed glass windows and desks and unfurled banners reading "Kill Japanese Robbers" and "Boycott Japanese Goods" before being chased away by hundreds of police, according to a hotel employee, who declined to give her name. The hotel's Japanese restaurant was forced to close all day, she said.

In Shenzhen, a boom city adjacent to Hong Kong, Lily Qin, a 24-year-old student, described fleeing tear gas police fired at demonstrators. Transport in one area of the bustling Futian district of the city was "totally paralyzed," she said.

In the central city of Nanchang, one resident contacted by telephone said the window of a store selling Sony goods was smashed. "I saw a female car owner crying beside her Nissan sedan that was turned over," he said.

The embassy official said that around 10 Japanese companies in the coastal city of Qingdao, a magnet for Japanese investment, had reported damage. Protesters set on fire a sales outlet of Toyota Motor Corp. [7203.TO](#) +1.42% in the city on Saturday, a public-relations officer from Japan's largest automobile maker said.

Violent clashes between protesters and riot police continued on Sunday afternoon in southern China, sparked by a dispute between China and Japan over a series of tiny islands between the two countries. Courtesy AP.

Demonstrators also are suspected to have set ablaze Saturday a Panasonic Corp. [6752.TO](#) +1.44% factory in Shandong that produces electronic parts such as those for television sets, a public-relations officer from the electronic maker said.

The last time demonstrations erupted on this scale was in 2005 over former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to a controversial Japanese shrine that honors the country's war dead. Back then, tens of thousands of protesters marched through Shanghai, smashing Japanese businesses along the way.

This time, Shanghai was relatively quiet. Several hundred mostly peaceful demonstrators were outnumbered by uniformed and paramilitary police who carefully controlled access to the front of Japan's consulate. Police permitted demonstrators to group into bunches of 80 to 100, then offered them instructions through megaphones before allowing teams to pass near the consulate entrance for a few minutes at a time.

Mr. Noda is under pressure to minimize his party's potential losses in elections for the lower house of parliament, which could be held as early as November, and in which the Chinese issues may feature prominently. Speaking Sunday in a televised debate with other members of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, he said that the protests threaten "the safety of the Japanese nationals and companies."

"I will strongly demand to the Chinese government that it ensure their safety, and at the same time I will protest" over the violence, he said.

However, Mr. Noda also signaled his desire to retain healthy economic ties with China, which is Japan's largest trading partner, amid his country's sharpening economic slowdown.

He said one of his two policy pillars over the territorial spat is a "firm response." But the other pillar is "levelheadedness."

"It is important to remember that we are the world's second- and third-largest economies, and growth in China means opportunities for Japan," he said. "It is important for both sides to respond while thinking calmly of [the importance of] deepening such mutually beneficial, strategic relationships."

Chinese state media also sought to limit the damage. In some cases during the weekend protests, "patriotic acts exceeded the boundary of reason and legitimacy and conversely turned into the destruction of other people's property and violated compatriots' reasonable interests," read a commentary in the Changjiang Daily, a state-backed newspaper in the central city of Wuhan. The commentary also was posted to the website of the People's Daily, the Communist Party's flagship mouthpiece.

More protests are expected on Tuesday, the anniversary of an incident in 1931 in which the Japanese army blew up a railway in China and, by insisting that it was done by the Chinese military, used it as an excuse for invading.

The Japanese embassy official in Beijing said that ahead of the anniversary the embassy will keep urging Japanese citizens in China to avoid speaking their language loudly. He said he expected many Japanese companies will suspend operations on Tuesday, and that most Japanese schools will close.

Possibly complicating Tokyo's handling of the territorial spat, the man chosen to succeed Japan's current ambassador to China, Shinichi Nishimiya, died Sunday morning. The 60-year-old career diplomat was rushed to the hospital in Tokyo late last week—two days after his appointment to the post—because of an illness.

Mr. Nishimiya had been scheduled to leave for Beijing in mid-October to replace Japan's current top envoy to China, Uichiro Niwa, who has been under fire for making what many Japanese have perceived as pro-China remarks over the islets issue.

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Reappearance of Xi Eases Transition Concerns

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By JEREMY PAGE

BEIJING—China said that Vice President Xi Jinping, the man expected to take over as the country's top leader in the next few weeks, will attend an international trade fair this week, another apparent move to quash speculation about his health following an unexplained two-week absence from public engagements.

Mr. Xi made his first public appearance since Sept. 1 on Saturday, when state media and witnesses reported that he met students and staff at the China Agricultural University in Beijing in the company of three other senior Communist Party officials.

International concern and speculation about Mr. Xi's health was triggered when he canceled several scheduled meetings at short notice this month, including one with visiting U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. U.S. officials said they were told Mr. Xi had a bad back.

As the Chinese government repeatedly declined to comment on the matter last week, rumors of a more-serious health problem circulated among party members and foreign diplomats, raising fears that a once-a-decade leadership in the fall could be disrupted.

But Mr. Xi, who is 59 years old, appeared healthy and relaxed during his university visit, according to witnesses.

One male student at the university said he had been standing about three or four steps away from the Chinese vice president, and he saw no signs of any health issue as Mr. Xi was shown round the campus by university officials.

"He sounded perfectly normal," said the student. "You definitely couldn't see any sign of him suffering from serious illness or back injury recently."

Another student said Mr. Xi was "very talkative" and showed no signs of having suffered a stroke—one of the rumors that circulated last week.

State media reports on the university visit made no mention of Mr. Xi's health or his fortnight away from the public eye.

On Sunday, Hong Lei, a foreign ministry spokesman, said Mr. Xi would attend the opening ceremony and "other important activities" of the 9th China-ASEAN Expo, according to the Xinhua news agency, the main government mouthpiece.

The trade fair is due to run from Sept. 21-25 in the southwestern city of Nanning, and will be attended by several Southeast Asian leaders, including Thein Sein, president of Myanmar, and Nguyen Tan Dung, who is prime minister of Vietnam, Xinhua said.

With Mr. Xi's apparent return to public duty, the party leadership is expected to announce soon the dates for the 18th Party Congress at which he is expected to take over President Hu Jintao's most powerful post as Party General Secretary, according to diplomats and analysts.

They also say they expect the party leadership to announce whether Bo Xilai, the ousted party official, will face criminal charges following the conviction of his wife last month for the murder of a British businessman.

Mr. Bo, once seen as a candidate for the top leadership, was stripped of his party posts and placed under investigation for unspecified "serious disciplinary violations" in April.

Mr. Hong from the foreign ministry said last week that preparations for the Congress were "well under way" and that Chinese authorities would announce the dates of the meeting "in due course."

Party insiders say it is most likely to occur in mid or late October. Several hotels that are being used to accommodate delegates to the Congress said that Chinese authorities had block-booked rooms for most of October.

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Panetta seeks closer Sino-U.S. ties as China military expands

September 17, 2012

[Reuters](#)

By David Alexander

TOKYO - U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta will look for ways to deepen military relations with China during a visit to Asia this week, even as he works to bolster U.S. alliances in the region as part of a strategic shift that Beijing views with concern.

Panetta, who arrived in Tokyo on Sunday, is making his third trip to Asia as defense secretary at a time when China is embroiled in testy territorial disputes with Japan and the Philippines, two key U.S. allies in the region.

Scores of cities across China erupted in anti-Japan protests at the weekend in which demonstrators looted shops and attacked Japanese cars and restaurants. They were angered by Japan's decision on Tuesday to buy a tiny group of disputed islands which Tokyo calls the Senkaku and Beijing calls the Diaoyu from a private Japanese owner.

Panetta will discuss with Japanese officials the realignment of U.S. military basing in Japan and expanding ballistic missile defense cooperation before heading to Beijing to try to deepen and broaden military-to-military ties.

He will wrap up his tour with defense cooperation talks in New Zealand.

Senior U.S. and Chinese defense officials have made an effort to push their military relationship forward since it resumed a year and a half ago after a bitter break over U.S. arms sales to self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing views as a breakaway province.

However, despite high-level visits by top officials, relations between the Pentagon and the People's Liberation Army are marked by wariness and mistrust.

"This is a relationship that has in the past been characterized by a lot of ups and downs and an on-again, off-again cycle that reflected the lack of a solid foundation ... sufficient to weather the type of turbulence that's natural in a relationship that's as broad and complex as the one that we have with China," a senior U.S. defense official said on condition of anonymity.

"We're not there yet in terms of where we'd like to be in our military-to-military relationship, but visits like the one that Secretary Panetta is going to have ... sustain the forward progress that we've been able to make over the past several months."

U.S. defense officials pressed for a restoration of military-to-military ties with China due to concerns about the direction of Beijing's military modernization efforts, including development of anti-ship missiles, stealth aircraft and its first aircraft carrier.

Many of the weapons worry U.S. military leaders because they appear to be aimed at countering U.S. strengths and denying U.S. access to waterways in the region.

U.S. defense officials believe that by engaging in cooperative efforts with the Chinese military, the two sides will gain greater familiarity with each other's operations and develop transparency and communications channels that can help avoid misunderstandings that could lead to conflict.

But Dean Cheng, a China analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank in Washington, said it was not clear exactly what the upside to renewed ties had been.

"The relationship is not in the deep freeze, but there is, at best, limited evidence of any kind of progress," he said. "The Chinese military remains averse to transparency as the West understands it and remains hostile to things like U.S. military ships transiting China's EEZ (exclusive economic zone) without prior permission."

The U.S. push for deeper ties could be especially tough-going at a time when China is not only squaring off with its neighbors over potentially resource-rich islands in the East and South China Seas, but also hunkered down for a once in a decade leadership transition.

The United States is officially neutral on the territorial disputes and has urged the parties involved to settle their disputes peacefully, a point Panetta said he would raise in Beijing.

'WE DON'T WANT PROVOCATIVE BEHAVIOR'

"The United States does not take a position with regards to territorial disputes, but we do urge not just China but the other countries that are involved to engage in a process in which they can peacefully resolve these issues," Panetta told reporters on his plane en route to Tokyo.

He said he would encourage China to engage in the dispute-resolution process promoted by ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, in an effort to try to resolve the disagreements peacefully.

"What we don't want is to have any kind of provocative behavior on the part of China or anybody else result in conflict," Panetta said. "And my purpose will be to urge that they engage in the effort by the ASEAN nations to try to work out a format for resolving these issues."

China's claims over much of the South China Sea, including the Spratly and Paracel islands, have put it at loggerheads with Vietnam, the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations. A similar dispute has set China against Japan in the East China Sea.

China has been irked by the U.S.-backed proposals for a multilateral approach to resolving such disputes, preferring to negotiate separately with each of the far less powerful Asian claimants.

Panetta said he hoped to talk to Chinese defense officials about cooperating on a range of additional issues where the two countries have common interests, including nuclear proliferation, freedom of navigation, piracy, trade and humanitarian assistance.

"These are all areas where we can work together to try to provide security support for the Asia-Pacific region that will enhance the ability of that region to be able to prosper in the future," Panetta said. "Those are some of the areas that I'd like to work on."

Even if Panetta is successful in moving U.S.-China cooperation to a new level, it is still not clear that the relationship will deliver the kind of communications U.S. officials hope is possible.

"Part of the question is what we want out of the mil-mil (military-to-military) relationship," Cheng said. "If it is simply to have a channel available, then it is succeeding. If, however, it is to have a channel of communications that can avert a crisis or tamp down escalation at critical moments, that is unlikely to happen under any circumstances."

"The PLA's procedures and organization, including the important role of political officers, does not match against how the US tends to operate."

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Google Blocks Anti-Islam Film In Indonesia: Govt

September 17, 2012

AFP

YouTube has begun restricting access to videos of an anti-Islamic film in the world's most populous Muslim nation, a government official said Sunday.

"Google, which is YouTube's parent company, emailed us on Thursday evening to say it had blocked Indonesia's access to 16 URLs related to the "Innocence of Muslims" videos on the site," Communications and Information Ministry spokesman Gatot Dewa Broto told AFP.

Extracts of the film were still available on the video-sharing website on Sunday, but Broto said Google was "making special effort" to prevent the film from being watched in Indonesia.

"We understand that it takes time for Google to block everything as people continue to upload those sensitive videos. We appreciate Google's cooperation," he said.

Broto said the government also wrote to Blackberry maker Research In Motion on Friday to filter the videos on its smartphones.

Indonesia is the Canada-based company's biggest market outside North America, with subscriptions expected to almost double to 9.7 million by 2015.

"We could access the videos on Blackberry too so we wrote to RIM to ask that it filter them, and RIM has been very co-operative," he added.

Besides Indonesia, Google has denied access to the video in Libya, Egypt and India.

In cities across the Muslim world protesters have vented their fury at the "Innocence of Muslims" -- an amateur film produced in the United States -- by targeting symbols of US influence ranging from embassies and schools to fast food chains.

Hundreds of Indonesians staged rallies against the United States on Friday and Saturday over the film, which portrays the Prophet Mohammed as an immoral sexual deviant.

In the worst violence triggered by the film, the US ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, and three other Americans were killed late Tuesday when suspected Islamic militants fired rocket-propelled grenades at the US consulate in Benghazi.

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Panetta Targets Two Pacific Disputes

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By JULIAN E. BARNES

YOKOTA, Japan—On U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's agenda as he arrived in Japan on Sunday was the goal of helping to defuse a pair of growing disputes, one between Japan and China, and the other between Japan and the U.S.

The U.S. is increasingly worried that territorial disputes in the Pacific could inadvertently erupt into a conflict and is also hoping to disentangle snares in its own relationship with Japan that could threaten to derail the deployment of a new Marine troop-transport aircraft.

With tensions already high between Japan and China over disputed islands in the East China Sea, protests by Chinese citizens surged Saturday over Tokyo's decision last week to buy three islands it doesn't own from their private owner.

Mr. Panetta, who heads to Beijing after his Tokyo visit, said the U.S. hopes territorial disputes in both the East China and South China seas can be settled peacefully. Tensions have flared in the South China Sea in recent months between China and the Philippines over control of the Scarborough Shoals.

"What we don't want is any kind of provocative behavior on the part of China or anybody else, resulting in conflict," Mr. Panetta said at a news conference aboard his plane en route to Japan. Provocations, he said, could lead to the possibility of misjudgments and eventually violence. "And that conflict would have the potential of expanding," he warned.

Mr. Panetta is to meet with Japanese Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto on Monday, and the two men are scheduled to hold a news conference.

Mr. Panetta will also have to navigate the shoals of a conflict in which the U.S. is more directly involved. Protests have grown in recent weeks in Okinawa over deployment of the Marine Corps tilt-rotor V-22 Osprey. Japanese officials have raised concerns about its safety and flight record and have succeeded in blocking deployment of as many as 24 of the aircraft on Okinawa. The first 12 V-22 are grounded at the U.S. base in Iwakuni, and haven't been allowed on to Okinawa. Mr. Panetta didn't address the disagreement over the Ospreys directly over the weekend. But he emphasized the importance the U.S. places on its alliance with Japan, and Japan's role in hosting U.S. forces in the region.

Japanese officials have focused on recent accidents with the aircraft, which can take off and land like a helicopter but flies like a plane. Okinawans are hoping to restrict the altitudes at which the Ospreys can fly, but Marines object to the restrictions.

In a briefing in Washington on Friday, a senior U.S. defense official said that the U.S. "looked forward" to making progress on the Osprey issue and that Tokyo and Washington were in a good dialogue over the deployment. "This entire process has been about reconfirming the safety," of the Osprey, the official said. "We have had a lengthy, robust, collaborative, constructive process that has basically led to a great deal of understanding, transparency and helped us make progress on this issue."

Despite the collaboration and transparency, there is little doubt that concerns remain in Okinawa over the continued presence of the Marines and their plans to deploy the tilt-rotor Osprey.

"That alliance provides us with a great deal of support with the deployment we make to the Pacific," he said. He also noted that the U.S. has made progress in the past year in reaching agreements over the

future of the Marine force in Okinawa. Despite the new agreement, some of the stickiest issues—such as moving the main military base to a more rural part of the island—remain unresolved.

Indonesia will try to rally Southeast Asian nations meeting at the United Nations this week behind a new attempt at talks with China to manage territorial disputes in the South China Sea. "We see this as a very serious problem and one that is demanding a solution by all of us," Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa said Friday.

Indonesia's effort appears aimed primarily at restoring a semblance of unity among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations at a time when the Philippines, in particular, is seeking stronger backing from its partners. Indonesia has sought to revive long-stalled negotiations over a code of conduct to act as a framework for disputes pending a negotiated resolution.
(top)

NEA

U.S. Outposts Still Face Threat In Muslim World

September 17, 2012

Washington Post

By Michael Birnbaum And Karin Brulliard

CAIRO - After days of anti-American turmoil in the Muslim world, governments on Sunday looked ahead to a week of trying to make an uneasy accommodation between the anger of their citizens and their desire to convince the United States of their goodwill.

But U.S. diplomatic outposts remained under threat. In Pakistan, at least one protester was killed and 18 were injured Sunday as hundreds of people broke through a barricade in a march to the U.S. consulate in Karachi, and thousands more rallied in Lahore, where American flags were burned, the Associated Press reported.

In Cairo, the U.S. Embassy returned to full staffing Sunday, a spokesman said, for the first time since Tuesday protests against an anti-Islam movie made in the United States sparked turmoil across the Muslim world. But the American diplomatic presence remained reduced elsewhere in the region, meaning that there were fewer routes to repair relations even as they came under the most strain since the wave of democratic change caused last year by the Arab Spring.

In Tunisia, where additional security has been deployed to protect the embassy, the Saturday decision to withdraw non-essential U.S. embassy staff from the mission there appeared to jar Tunisian officials, who have marketed the country as a model of democratic transformation after the peaceful toppling last year of longtime president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Tunisia's 2011 protests set the rest of the Arab world afire - and led, in the end, to newfound freedoms for many citizens to express their distaste for their own governments and for the United States.

Leaders have struggled ever since to accommodate those anti-American sentiments.

In an address to the nation Friday night, Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki condemned that day's violent attack on the U.S. Embassy and an American school, in which four protesters were killed. He said those who organized the protest - widely described here as religious hardliners known as Salafists - had "crossed a red line." Yet he also sought to appease the sentiments of those reportedly angered by the film, "The Innocence of Muslims," saying Tunisia would work with Egypt to sue its producers.

Hedi Ben Abbas, a foreign affairs minister of state whose portfolio includes the Americas, said in an interview Sunday that the Tunisian government "deeply regrets" the American decision to pull its diplomats following the attack, which he insisted was triggered by religious fervor, not anti-American anger.

Security officials, Ben Abbas said, were overhauling their procedures and could now "guarantee" the safety of all diplomatic facilities and foreigners. He said the government, which is headed by a moderate Islamist party that has faced criticism for tolerating religious zealotry, is determined to respond more firmly than it has to previous violent protests staged by Salafists. Dozens of people suspected of involvement in the riot have been arrested, according to local news reports.

Friday's demonstration, Ben Abbas said, "was for us the end of the game."

"We understand that there was a failure," he said of security measures at the embassy and school. "Let's be clear, the plan we put in place was not enough. It was weak."

"The government of America cannot be responsible for the movie," he said. Similarly, he said, "The Americans cannot blame the Tunisian government for the behavior" of protesters.

"The United States should trust us again," Ben Abbas said. "We need them more than ever to support democracy."

American support comes in many forms in the region, ranging from diplomatic relations to aid to investment. Its future is being newly evaluated.

In Egypt, the government of President Mohamed Morsi and the Obama administration had been hammering out the final points of an aid deal that could forgive a sizeable chunk of the more than \$3 billion that the Egyptian government owes to the United States. But with embassy activity largely reduced last week and the United States initially disappointed at the Egyptian government's response to the protests, the final outcome of the aid talks remains uncertain, as does congressional support for a deal.

Morsi has pursued a diplomatic path far different from former president Hosni Mubarak, who hewed closely to the U.S. line, or even from the interim military-dominated government that ran the country from February 2011 until Morsi took power at the end of June. On Sunday, Morsi met in Cairo with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, despite an International Criminal Court warrant for the Sudanese leader's arrest - and despite a sharp decline in relations between Sudan and the United States since Friday, when the U.S. Embassy was attacked by protesters in Khartoum.

The Sudanese government refused Saturday to allow U.S. Marines to secure U.S. diplomats there, and the State Department pulled out nonessential personnel in response.

Separately, in Libya, where U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens was killed Tuesday along with three other U.S. embassy staffers in an attack on the consulate in Benghazi, President Mohammed el-Megarif on Sunday announced the arrests of about 50 people in connection with the attack. In an interview with CBS News, el-Megarif said that "foreigners," some from Mali and Algeria, had participated in the attack

and that he had "no doubt" that it was pre-planned. But on the same program, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said that officials had seen no evidence to support such a conclusion.

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Panetta: Violence Leveling Off; Protests To Go On

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By Lolita C. Baldor

ABOARD A US MILITARY AIRCRAFT - U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta says the turmoil raging across the Muslim world is likely to continue into the days ahead, but he says the violence expected by the U.S. appears to be leveling off.

He said the Pentagon has "deployed our forces to a number of areas in the region to be prepared to respond to any requests that we receive to be able to protect our personnel and our American property."

He declined to provide more details on reports that the military may be moving additional military forces so they can respond to unrest in any of a number of regions of concern.

"I think our approach right now is to not do anything until we've been requested to do it by the State Department," Panetta told reporters traveling with him to Asia. But he noted that, "I think that we have to continue to be very vigilant because I suspect that ... these demonstrations are likely to continue over the next few days, if not longer."

Protests by furious Muslims erupted in countries around the world in recent days, with some spawning violence and even deaths over an anti-Islam video shot in California that denigrates the Prophet Muhammad. In places like Libya, Sudan and Tunisia, protesters stormed U.S. embassies, and an American fast food restaurant was burned in Lebanon.

In response, the Pentagon dispatched elite Marine rapid response teams to Libya and Yemen, but a team deployed to Khartoum on Friday was turned back when the Sudanese government objected.

Asked about Sudan's decision, Panetta said host countries have the right to reject such military deployments.

"My understanding is that they felt that they could provide sufficient security to be able to protect our embassy and our personnel there," said Panetta. "And you know, in many ways, as all of you know the primary responsibility for protecting embassies rests with the host country."

Known as a fleet antiterrorism security teams, the units were sent in response to violent protests in Khartoum where protesters tried to climb the walls of the U.S. Embassy, setting off a battle with police.

The Navy also moved two warships to positions off the coast of Libya. The two destroyers are largely meant as a show of force, but they carry Tomahawk missiles and can also be available for evacuations or other missions as needed.

The intensity of the anti-American fervor initially caught U.S. leaders by surprise, but in the last several days the Obama administration has deployed military units to shore up security in hotspots, and used

diplomacy to call for calm and urge foreign governments to protect American interests in their countries.

It also has been unclear how much of the violence was spontaneously triggered by the film and how much of it was spurred on by anti-American militants using it as a tool to grow and enrage the crowds.

The al-Qaida affiliate in Yemen praised the killing of the U.S. ambassador in Libya in an online statement Saturday and called for more attacks to expel American embassies from Muslim nations.

Chris Stevens, the U.S. ambassador to Libya, was killed Tuesday along with three other Americans, as violent protesters stormed the consulate in Benghazi. President Barack Obama has vowed that the attackers would be brought to justice, but has also stressed that the U.S. respects religious freedom.

The protests were set off by a low-budget, crudely produced film called "Innocence of Muslims," which portrays Muhammad as a fraud, a womanizer and a child molester. A 14-minute excerpt of the film, which is both in English and dubbed into Arabic, has been available on YouTube, although some countries have cut access to the site.

Panetta was traveling to Asia, where he will visit Japan, China and New Zealand.

His visit comes amid escalating tensions in the region including tussles over several disputed islands in the East China Sea. It is Panetta's third trip to the region in the last 11 months, reflecting the Pentagon's ongoing effort to put a greater military focus on the Pacific region.

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Muslim Rage Over Film Echoes Back To Islam's Internal Struggles

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By Brian Murphy

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates - At the height of the latest Islamic rage, one of the Muslim world's first media-celebrity imams told worshippers they were indeed witnessing a clash of civilizations. Just not the kind you think.

This one also is within Islam, and it helps explain the multiple personalities of the fury.

It's political: The uncompromising ethos of extremism clawing for any gains against more moderate voices. It's social: Fed by an explosive blend of economic stagnation, anger over U.S.-led wars and - in some places since last week - frustration as the soaring hopes of the Arab Spring hit the grinding realities of rebuilding.

And it cuts deeply into questions that have added resonance in a hyper-connected world that moves at the quicksilver pace of the Web: How to coexist with the free-speech openness of the West and whether violence is ever a valid response.

"Our manner of protesting should reflect sense and reason," urged Egyptian-born cleric Youssef al-Qaradawi in his Friday sermon in Qatar's capital, Doha, where he has found a worldwide audience through the Internet and a show on the pan-Arab network Al-Jazeera.

Yet such appeals - while frequent from many Islamic leaders and scholars in the past week - have competed against opposing calls that can tap deeper passions that have been funneled into violence. Political factions and hard-line clerics across the Muslim world have been quick to try to capitalize as after other perceived offences against the faith.

"There's no doubt that every Muslim feels in some ways deeply troubled by any insults to the Prophet Muhammad, but how many have seen the video of this movie to make up their own minds? Very few," said Sami al-Faraj, director of the Kuwait Center for Strategic Studies. "You need someone to organize the protests and, in effect, throw the switch."

It's come in many forms.

Ultraconservative Islamists apparently have taken the lead in protests in Arab Spring countries such as Tunisia and Egypt in a show of force against the new leadership and their Western allies. In a curious battle of perceptions, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood-led government called out riot troops to protect the U.S. Embassy against protesters also claiming to "defend" Islam.

In Libya, U.S. investigators are examining whether armed militants used the uproar over the film as cover to launch a pre-planned attack on the U.S. Consulate in the eastern city of Benghazi, killing the ambassador and three other Americans. The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, said Sunday the attack was not co-ordinated and premeditated, but others have challenged that view.

Crowds in Yemen condemned the film but also chanted against the continued U.S. military presence such as drone strikes that have targeted suspected al-Qaida leaders.

"Obviously there's a latent anti-Americanism that is coming out," said Salman Shaikh, director of The Brookings Doha Center in Qatar. "But that is only part of this," he said. "This is primarily about a struggle for the soul of these states."

Elsewhere - from Nigeria to Australia - hard-line clerics and parties have mobilized demonstrations in both expressions of anger and messages to rivals. In Iran, protesters were given pre-made placards denouncing the U.S. in a clear sign of a state-organized demonstration.

On Sunday, Iranian newspapers reported that a religious foundation has increased the reward for killing British author Salman Rushdie to \$3.3 million from \$2.8 million in response to alleged insults to the Prophet Muhammad in his novel "The Satanic Verses." Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a death fatwa against Rushdie in 1989, but Iran officials later distanced themselves from the edict.

Bahrain protest groups, meanwhile, have used Twitter to organize demonstrations that included burning American flags in the nation that hosts the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. Pakistan's conservative Islamist parties sent out text messages, mosque announcements and made phone calls to bring out protest crowds, including about 1,000 people in the northwestern city of Peshawar on Sunday and hundreds who rushed the U.S. consulate in Karachi, sparking clashes with police in which one demonstrator was killed.

"What kind of freedom of expression is that which hurts the religious sentiments of others?" said Haider Gul, a grocery store owner who joined the anti-American rally in Peshawar.

This question is not new - tumbling back over centuries and different faiths. It flared anew in 2005 when a Danish newspaper published cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad that were deemed offensive by many Muslims. And it was a centerpiece of the debates after the 2004 slaying of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, whose film "Submission" criticized the treatment of Muslim women.

But the current film, "Innocence of Muslims," brings a new element: What if the sole intent was to provoke backlash and violence? It's unlikely to bring any clear-cut answers in the short term. America's free speech protections give a wide berth for filmmakers.

There are cases, however, where boundaries have been set. Last year, two Florida pastors were blocked from demonstrating outside a mosque in Dearborn, Michigan, after a jury ruled it would have breached the peace. One of the pastors, Terry Jones, touched off a series of violent protests in Afghanistan that killed more than a dozen people after he burned a Qur'an in March 2011.

If anything, the cultural gaps may have been pried farther apart by the scope of the latest violence and bloodshed.

Google has refused a White House request to take down the video clip from its YouTube site, but is restricting access in certain countries including Egypt, Libya and Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation. A YouTube statement said the video was within its content guidelines. "This can be a challenge because what's OK in one country can be offensive elsewhere," it said.

At the same time, it's also opened fault lines within the Muslim world over what's an acceptable response. In many ways, it's simply an extension of the same internal struggles over Islam's moral compass that has gripped the faith for decades.

An Indonesian Muslim scholar, Komaruddin Hidayat, said Muslims have the duty to oppose to anything they deem offensive to their faith, but must "avoid using violence in expressing their objections." At the other end of the Muslim world in Nigeria, a top Islamic leader, Sheik Sani Yahaya Jingir, said violence never brings "any benefit to Islam."

For Jumaa al-Qurishi, a 38-year-old Iraq librarian: "This is not freedom. This is an act of aggression."

"Yes, we understand the First Amendment and all of this stuff," wrote Khalid Amayreh, a prominent Islamist commentator and blogger in Hebron on the West Bank. "But you must also understand that the Prophet (for us) is a million times more sacred than the American Constitution."

He adds: "As Americans have their own idiots and fanatics, we, too, have our idiots and fanatics. And as Americans are utterly unable - probably unwilling as well - to stop their idiots, we, too, are less able to rein in ours."

There's no wonder why the loudest voices still tend to rule the day, said Issandr El Amrani, a Moroccan-born journalist and visiting fellow at the European Center for Foreign Relations, a pan-European think-tank.

"The resulting cascade of outrage is now predictable," he wrote in Abu Dhabi's The National newspaper. "Islamophobes in the West will say, 'We told you they're fanatics,' and the crowd-riling demagogues

here will say, 'We told you they disrespect us.' And politicians everywhere will use the language of outrage in their petty calculations."

In Gaza, 23-year-old Rawhi Alwan described a cycle of mutual blame: "Some crazy Muslims will commit devilish acts to respond to the devilish sin."

Before he left for a peaceful Friday demonstration against the film, he changed his Facebook profile picture. It became an image pledging loyalty to Prophet Muhammad.

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Egypt Denounces Breaching Of US Embassy Compound

September 17, 2012

[Associated Press](#)

CAIRO - Egypt's presidential spokesman says the breaching of the U.S. embassy in Cairo during protests over an anti-Islam film was "unjustified," denouncing it in the strongest words to date to come from the nation's highest office.

Spokesman Yasser Ali's comments Sunday seem aimed to defuse criticism of President Mohammed Morsi, who condemned the breaching of the mission's perimeter only two days afterward, leading to tension with Washington.

Scores of Egyptian protesters scaled the embassy walls on Tuesday and entered its courtyard, tearing down the U.S. flag. Hours later, attackers in Libya killed four diplomats, including the ambassador, in an assault on the Benghazi consulate.

After three days of clashes in Cairo, authorities blocked off the embassy's street with a concrete wall. The visa section remained closed Sunday despite earlier plans to reopen.

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Iran Commander Warns Israel, US Against Attack

September 17, 2012

[Associated Press](#)

By Ali Akbar Dareini

TEHRAN - The top commander in Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard warned Sunday that his country's missiles will ensure "nothing will remain" of Israel if it takes military action against Tehran over its controversial nuclear program.

Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari also warned that Iran might close the Straits of Hormuz if it is attacked, withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and hit U.S. bases in the Middle East.

Such warnings and references to Israel's destruction have been made before by Iranian officials. But Gen. Jafari's comments to a Tehran news conference were an unusually detailed, strongly worded and comprehensive listing of the means that Iran says it has to retaliate against a strike on its nuclear facilities.

The U.S. and Israel have left open the possibility of such a strike if Iran does not back down from what they say are a push to develop nuclear weapons. Iran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

"Our response to Israel is clear: I think nothing will remain of Israel (should it attack Iran). Given Israel's small land area and its vulnerability to a massive volume of Iran's missiles, I don't think any spot in Israel will remain safe," he said.

He said Iran's response to any attack will begin near the Israeli border. The Islamic Republic has close ties with militants in Gaza and Lebanon, both of whom have rocket arsenals that could be used for cross-border strikes.

He said he did not believe however that Israel would attack on its own. Should the U.S. launch a strike, Jafari suggested that Iran could respond with missile salvos at U.S. bases in the Gulf.

"The US military bases sprawled around Iran are considered a big vulnerability. Even the missile shields that they have set up, based on information we have, could only work for a few missiles but when exposed to a massive volume of missiles, the shields will lose their efficiency and will not work," he said.

He also said that Iran warned that oil shipments through the strategic Strait of Hormuz will be in jeopardy if a war breaks out between Iran and the United States. Iranian officials have previously threatened to close the waterway, the route for a fifth of the world's oil, but less frequently in recent months.

"If a war breaks out where one side is Iran and the other side is the West and U.S., it's natural that a problem should occur in the Strait of Hormuz. Export of energy will be harmed. It's natural that this will happen," he said.

Gen. Jafari said that, if attacked, Iran will no longer be committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, under whose terms U.N. inspectors visit Iranian nuclear sites. He said however that this does not mean that Iran would build a nuclear weapon.

"If the world and international organizations fail to prevent such an attack, it's natural that Iran's commitments (to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty) would naturally change and the situation would be different from the past. These are the risks and consequences that such an attack will bring about, and these matters would be a deterrent."

Jafari's comments come as U.S.-led naval forces from the West and Arab allies gather for naval maneuvers in the Persian Gulf that include mine-sweeping exercises.

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Iran Guided By 'Unbelievable Fanaticism:' Netanyahu

September 16, 2012

AFP

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made a fresh push to turn the screws on Iran's nuclear program, saying the Islamic Republic's leaders are guided by "unbelievable fanaticism."

Netanyahu's comments, part of an interview to be aired on NBC television's "Meet the Press" on Sunday, came after the hawkish leader of the Jewish state made repeated demands that US President Barack Obama set unambiguous "red lines" on the program.

"I think Iran is very different. They put their zealotry above their survival. They have situation bombers all over the place. I wouldn't rely on their rationality," Netanyahu said, suggesting Iran cannot be contained in the same way as the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

"Since the advent of nuclear weapons, you have countries that had access to nuclear weapons who always made a careful calculation of cost and benefit. But Iran is guided by a leadership with an unbelievable fanaticism."

Netanyahu even made a link between Iran's hardline leadership and the wave of violent protests against US and other Western diplomatic posts around the world triggered by an amateur Internet film made in the United States that denigrates Islam and its Prophet Mohammed.

"It's the same fanaticism that you see storming your embassies today. You want these fanatics to have nuclear weapons?" he asked.

The Israeli leader said critics who argue that taking action against Iran's nuclear program was "a lot worse" than a nuclear-armed Tehran, or that an Iran with nuclear weapons would stabilize the Middle East, "have set a new standard for human stupidity."

Israel, the Middle East's sole, if undeclared, nuclear power, has said a nuclear-armed Iran would pose an existential threat to the Jewish state and has threatened unilateral military action against Tehran.

But Washington backs continued diplomatic pressure and says it is not the time for a strike against the nuclear program, which Israel and much of the West worry masks a weapons drive. ([top](#))

Pope Urges Peace at Mass in Beirut

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By FARNAZ FASSIHI

BEIRUT—Pope Benedict XVI delivered an open-air Sunday Mass in Beirut to a crowd of more than 300,000 people that touched on the central theme of his trip: peace in the Middle East, namely Syria, and endurance for the region's Christian minorities.

The pope spoke of human suffering in wartime, highlighting women and children as first victims, and the necessity of all leaders in the region to come together as "brothers" and for Christians to play a constructive role as peacemakers.

"May God grant to your country, to Syria and to the Middle East the gift of peaceful hearts, the silencing of weapons and the cessation of all violence," the pope said at the end of a mass before a huge crowd of worshippers waving small flags of Lebanon and Vatican.

The pope arrived in Lebanon Friday on a three-day visit, which ended Sunday night. It was his first trip to Lebanon and coincided with widespread unrest across the Muslim world. Since last week, protesters have attacked a number of Western targets, from U.S. embassies to NATO bases and fast-food chains, many citing an inflammatory online movie made in the U.S. that ridiculed Prophet Muhammad.

While the pope didn't directly address the video, called "Innocence of Muslims," or the violence, he repeatedly called for tolerance among religious sects and an end for the "grim trail of death and destruction" in the region.

The Christian community in the Middle East, despite its ancient origins, is dwindling in many countries due to fears of unrest, rise of Islamism and economic hardship. The Arab Spring has exacerbated these sentiments, with Islamist parties rising to power and a still-unclear picture of the future.

In Lebanon, Christians account for about a third of the population and enjoy equal power sharing in the government. The president of Lebanon, for example, always comes from the Maronite Christian sect.

Many Christians attending the Sunday service said the pope's visit restored their confidence in the community and strengthened their standing. They said they continue to worry about Syria's unraveling next door and its ramifications on Lebanon's sectarian-driven politics.

"We are always asking ourselves what's our future here, what will happen to our children," said Rania Yammen, a 39-year-old interior designer, who attended mass with her husband and two small children from a mountain town several hours away. "This encourages me to stay and not migrate."

Many attendees of the Sunday Mass had traveled from all corners of Lebanon from early morning hours and walked several miles to reach the area. The event had a festive air, with colorful balloons being handed out, as well as free traditional Lebanese breakfast and bottles of water. Parents carried their children on their shoulders for a blessing, and many elderly couples walked slowly with their canes.

Rev. Federico Lombardi, a spokesman for the Vatican, said the crowd was estimated at 350,000 people. Syrian Christian refugees taking shelter in villages in the Bekaa Valley were bused to the event through church organizers.

During the pope's meeting Saturday with thousands of Christian youth, the pontiff addressed the Syrians in the crowd and said he admired their courage and asked them to pass a message to Christians inside Syria that the pope hasn't forgotten them.

"It's very important for the world to see that we are here, we exist and live together with the Muslims in the Arab world," said Najib Khoury, an 85-year-old retired oil worker, who sat on a curb in a side street to avoid the packed crowd but hear the pontiff in person.

The mass took place on Beirut's new waterfront area, a vast piece of land reclaimed after the civil war that has become a showcase of Lebanon's resilience and recovery after multiple wars with Israel and its own dark chapter of civil war.

The pope, wearing green vestments, sat on an altar with a backdrop of a giant stylized white Cedar tree, the symbol of Lebanon, which also appears on the nation's flag.

Officials and politicians from Lebanon's various sects, including the Shiite political and militant group Hezbollah, attended the mass to signal unity and support for the Vatican.

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Hezbollah Calls For Week Of Lebanon Demos Over Film

September 17, 2012

AFP

BEIRUT - Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah on Sunday called for a week of angry protests across Lebanon over a US-produced film mocking Islam that triggered uproar in the Muslim world.

"The whole world needs to see your anger on your faces, in your fists and your shouts," Nasrallah said in a televised speech.

The head of the powerful Shiite Muslim organisation spoke just hours after Pope Benedict XVI left Lebanon following a historic three-day visit in which he prayed that Middle East leaders would work towards peace and reconciliation.

Nasrallah noted that he purposely postponed his call for protests until after the pope's departure.

"The whole world should know that the Prophet has followers who will not be silent in the face of humiliation," said Nasrallah.

A low-budget movie, entitled "Innocence of Muslims", has sparked fury across the Islamic world for mocking the Prophet Mohammed, and for portraying Muslims as immoral and gratuitously violent.

Nasrallah called for protests in southern Beirut on Monday, in the southern city of Tyre on Wednesday, in the eastern city of Baalbek on Friday, in Bint Jbeil in south Lebanon on Saturday, and in Hermel in the eastern Bekaa valley region on Sunday. All are majority Shiite areas.

He also called for people across the Islamic world to demonstrate against the film, which he described as "the worst attack ever on Islam, worse than the Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie, the burning of the Koran in Afghanistan and the cartoons in the European media."

"There should be resolutions adopted in top international institutions, that are binding on all states and governments in the world, to forbid the defamation of religions," said Nasrallah, adding attacks on Muslims were "frequent".

"Those who write or draw or make such a film would know that they would be punished wherever they are, and they would not feel protected," said the Hezbollah chief.

He also blamed the United States for the film. "The film was made and spread from the US," said Nasrallah. "Muslims should say to the US: 'This happened in your state.'"

The United States on Thursday imposed new sanctions on Nasrallah and two other figures in the Shiite militia over their support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The US Treasury move adds to measures already levied on Hezbollah, which was first designated by Washington as a terrorist group in 2001.

In his speech, Nasrallah said Lebanon should call for an emergency meeting of the Arab League to discuss the anti-Islam film.

And shortly after his address ended, Lebanon's foreign ministry said in a statement that Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour had requested such a meeting of the 22-member bloc.

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Mideast Unrest Intensifies Debate On U.S. Intervention In Syria

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Robert F. Worth And Helene Cooper

DOHA, Qatar - In recent weeks, the growing death toll in Syria pushed that country's civil war to the top of the Obama administration's agenda, with some Arab leaders pressing harder for a greater American role in toppling Syria's leader, Bashar al-Assad.

Then came the protests of the past week in the Middle East - a vivid illustration that the United States' support for greater democracy in the Arab world during the past two years is no guarantee against the incendiary power of Islamist sentiment and anti-American rage.

The turmoil has only sharpened a painful quandary that had been largely overshadowed by the presidential campaign. Should the United States and its allies remain wary of toppling Mr. Assad, one of the region's last secular dictators, whose rule, however repressive, has kept the forces of populist Islam in check? Or do the protests underscore the risks of inaction, with a rapidly growing jihadi presence in Syria that is likely to further destabilize the entire region?

Already, the attacks on American and European diplomatic posts, and especially the deaths of an ambassador and three other Americans in Libya, have roused calls in the United States for disengagement from the Arab world and its seemingly endless mayhem. That a shoddy 14-minute video lampooning the Prophet Muhammad can provoke such anger, some say, bodes poorly for any future investment in Arab democracy.

Yet those calls to disengage, some analysts say, threaten to eclipse the larger context in Syria, where rising sectarian bloodshed and a growing Al Qaeda presence on Israel's doorstep could, if left unchecked, prove far more damaging to American interests than the latest turmoil.

"You can see why the U.S. would want to disengage after what just happened in Cairo and Benghazi," said Salman Shaikh, the director of the Brookings Doha Center. "But, in fact, the chaos and the Islamists we saw in Libya should be a warning to us about this policy of standing back. Syria could become far, far more dangerous than Libya for the United States and the region, and it's still not too late to make a difference."

The death toll in Syria has sharply increased in recent weeks, with some estimates putting it at more than 23,000. Regional powers like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which now provide a trickle of light weapons to the rebels, have made it clear that they will not play a more decisive role without American support.

At the same time, the increasingly sectarian nature of the conflict and the danger of becoming involved in a proxy war with Iran and Russia, which continue to provide military support to the Syrian government, have kept the Obama administration and its European allies cautious. Looming over any potential intervention is the specter of Iraq, where a sectarian civil war devastated the country in 2006 and 2007 despite a major American military presence.

One senior administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the attacks on American Embassies last week demonstrated the soundness of President Obama's approach, which involves providing humanitarian and logistical aid but not weapons to the rebels. Mr. Obama has been criticized by Republicans, including Senator John McCain of Arizona, who has advocated a military approach, and Mitt Romney, the party's presidential nominee, who proposes arming the opposition via intermediaries but not directly.

Any effort to intervene militarily in Syria would probably take place without the imprimatur of the United Nations Security Council, where Russia has consistently opposed it.

"These incidents will further give people pause because already our intelligence agencies have been telling us that amongst the Syrian opposition - the people who we're supposed to support - some of them are Al Qaeda affiliates," said Brian Katulis, a national security expert at the Center for American Progress, a research and advocacy organization with close ties to the Obama White House.

Adding to the complexity of the Syria issue is the connection with Iran and the debate in the United States and Israel over whether to use airstrikes to stop Iran's nuclear program. One argument for toppling Mr. Assad has been to weaken Tehran, which has depended on Syria as its lone Arab ally and conduit to Hezbollah and other anti-Israel groups. Iran's economy is already buckling under sanctions, and if Iran lost Syria's support, it might be more amenable to a compromise over its nuclear program, or so the theory goes.

But it is far from clear that Western intervention in Syria would succeed in ousting Iran, which has deep networks in the country and might prove more adept than any Western or Arab power at operating in a chaotic, post-Assad Syria.

Some proponents of intervention argue that it is likely to take place at some point, and that by then the United States and its allies will have fewer options. Mr. Obama has already said he would step in if Syria appeared ready to use chemical weapons, and a vastly increased death toll - or the threat of genocidal attacks on one of Syria's religious or ethnic minorities - would create much greater pressure to intervene. If the rebels succeed in toppling Mr. Assad on their own, the resulting chaos and power struggle would also create a strong incentive for intervention.

"The risk of not intervening is not just that you create greater operating room for jihadis," said Emile Hokayem, a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "You also risk not having any allies on the ground the day after Assad falls," and no power to shore up moderates in the new Syria.

Apart from the question of intervention, the latest anti-American protests could influence the way the United States allocates the limited support it has been providing to the rebels fighting Mr. Assad's government.

"The focus so far has been on identifying rebel groups to support" and weeding out the more Islamist elements, Mr. Hokayem said. "You can be sure those categories are going to harden."

Officials with the Free Syrian Army, the main rebel opposition group in Syria, have been in Washington calling for the United States and other nations to establish a partial no-fly zone over Syria.

Administration officials close to Mr. Obama say that while he remains opposed to military intervention in Syria, the events of the past week have not turned him away from any kind of engagement with the Syrian opposition.

Friends and associates of J. Christopher Stevens, the American ambassador killed during the attack in Benghazi, say the last thing that he would have wanted to see was the United States retreat from the Arab world, including Syria. Mr. Stevens was considered for a top post at the embassy in Damascus, the Syrian capital, before he decided to go to Libya.

"Chris believes, and would say, 'This takes a robust form of diplomacy that we're not good at because we're used to dealing with dictatorships,' " said Andrew J. Tabler, a Syria expert for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "He knew there were risks. What I'm worried about is if Libya is used as an excuse for the United States to pull back from the region. The reality there has just changed, and the people now are a factor in these countries."

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Elite Iranian Unit's Commander Says His Forces Are In Syria

September 17, 2012

[Washington Post](#)

By Babak Dehghanpisheh

BEIRUT - The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps said Sunday that members of its elite Quds Force are inside Syria but are not involved directly in military work, the first time a senior official has publicly admitted the involvement of Iranian military personnel in the Syrian conflict.

The Iranian's comments are one of the clearest signs yet that the conflict in Syria has evolved into a broader regional showdown with Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah supporting the government of President Bashar al-

Assad and Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar supporting the rebels. Both sides have been accused of funneling arms into the country.

"In comparison with the scale of support the Arab countries have given to opposition groups in Syria and their military presence, we haven't taken any action there," Maj. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, the commander of the Revolutionary Guard, said during a news conference in Tehran, according to the semi-official Fars News agency. "We have only given intellectual and advisory help and transferred experience."

The involvement of the Quds Force in Syria could be particularly worrying to Assad's foes. The unit is tasked with carrying out overseas operations for the Revolutionary Guards, and the U.S. military frequently accused it of training and arming Shiite militias in Iraq during the peak of the sectarian conflict there. In particular, the Quds Force was accused of supplying militia groups in Iraq with explosively formed penetrators, or EFPs. The deadly bombs, which can cut through thick armor, killed many American and Iraqi soldiers.

The Syrian government, for its part, has tried to focus the attention of the international community on the regional countries helping the rebels. Syrian officials on Sunday lashed out at the role Turkey is playing in the conflict by claiming that the Turkish government had opened its airports and borders to "al-Qaeda terrorists" who have killed many Syrians and damaged public and private property in the

country. The Syrian foreign ministry sent a letter of protest to the chairman of the U.N. Security Council and the U.N. secretary-general, the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported.

On Friday, Pope Benedict XVI, while en route to Lebanon for a three-day visit, also criticized the regional dimensions of the conflict by saying that importing arms into Syria is a "grave sin." He again addressed the bloody conflict in Syria, which has left more than 25,000 dead according to opposition groups, during a Sunday Mass that drew tens of thousands of people in Beirut. "Why so much horror? Why so many dead?" he asked.

The rebel fighters have said they are receiving arms from Qatar and Saudi Arabia, although officials from those countries have said little about their role. Iran, Hezbollah and Turkey have all strongly denied accusations of sending arms.

Iran's action

In the news conference Sunday, Jafari said that defending Syria is a "point of pride" for Iran but he stopped short of promising military intervention if Syria is attacked. If that happened, Jafari said, Iran wouldn't necessarily invoke the bilateral security agreement between the two countries and respond immediately with military force. Iran's actions would depend on "conditions," he said, according to Fars News, without giving further details.

In late August, Gen. Salar Abnoush, the commander of the Revolutionary Guard's Saheb al Amr unit, said that Iran was involved in the Syria conflict without explicitly mentioning the presence of Iranian military personnel, according to Iran's Daneshjoo news agency.

But there have been hints of Iran's increased involvement in recent weeks. In early August, 48 Iranians were kidnapped from a bus in Damascus. The Iranian government claimed they were pilgrims but members of the Free Syrian Army, who carried out the kidnapping, claimed they were Revolutionary Guards and posted a video online in which some of the kidnapped Iranians showed what appeared to be Guard IDs.

Not long after, Iran's foreign minister Ali Akbar Salehi said there were some retired Guards and other retired military personnel among the group of kidnapped men but they had all traveled to Syria as pilgrims.

Forces also in Lebanon

Iran's Revolutionary Guards are not only present in Syria. Jafari said Sunday that members of Iran's Quds Force are also in Lebanon in a non-military capacity without giving further details, according to Fars News.

Hezbollah, the Syrian government's strongest regional ally after Iran, has also been accused of sending fighters and weapons into the country. Asked about the role of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict, Jafari did not rule it out.

"Syrian forces have come to the aid of Lebanon in the past, and it's natural that if Syria needs help that the people of Lebanon will go to help them," Jafari said, according to Fars News. "This will not be related to Iran and, with attention to their close ties in the past, it's not unlikely that this would happen."

In the news conference Sunday, Jafari also commented on the militia groups, often referred to as "shabiha" by the opposition, which have been fighting alongside the Syrian military. Opposition activists accuse the shabiha of carrying out some of the worst atrocities in the 19-month conflict.

Jafari compared these fighters to the Basij, a plainclothes militia under the command of the Revolutionary Guard in Iran, and claimed they are a potent force that aids the Syrian military.

"There are more than 50,000 Syrian people who have organized as a people's army, or a force of Syrian Basij, who are standing beside the army in the face of the unfair attacks from the countries of the region and outside the region," Jafari said.

The Syrian government carried out attacks in more than half a dozen cities across the country on Sunday, killing at least 113 people, according to the Local Coordination Committees, an activist network. More than 40 people were killed in Aleppo alone, many of them from heavy shelling, the group claimed. ([top](#))

State Media Says Syrian Troops Have Captured Rebel-held Neighbourhood In Aleppo

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

BEIRUT - Syria's state-run news agency says troops have captured and cleared the neighbourhood of Midan in the embattled northern city of Aleppo.

SANA's announcement came as activists reported heavy bombardment Sunday of rebel-held areas throughout the country.

SANA says troops also killed dozens of rebels in other parts of Aleppo, the country's largest city and commercial centre.

The fight for Aleppo, a city of 3 million that was once a bastion of support for President Bashar Assad, is critical for both the regime and the opposition.

Its fall would give the opposition a major strategic victory with a stronghold in the north near the Turkish border. A rebel defeat, at the very least, would buy Assad more time.

The latest violence comes as millions of Syrian students began their school year.

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Syria accuses Turkey of allowing al-Qaida transit

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

By ALBERT AJI and BASSEM MROUE

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syria accused neighboring Turkey Sunday of allowing thousands of Muslim extremists to cross into its territory, as the government and opposition said an explosion killed at least seven and cut off a main road leading south from the capital.

In letters to the U.N. Security Council and Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, Syria's Foreign Ministry said Turkey allowed "thousands of al-Qaida, Takfiri and Wahhabi terrorists" access to the country in order to "kill innocent Syrians, blow up their properties and spread chaos and destruction."

Syrian authorities blame the anti-government uprising that began in March last year on a foreign conspiracy and accuse Gulf countries Saudi Arabia and Qatar, along with the U.S, other Western countries and Turkey, of offering funding and training to the rebels, whom they describe as "terrorists."

Turkey serves as headquarters for the leaders of the Free Syrian Army rebels and hosts many meetings of the Syrian National Council opposition group. Relations between Turkey and Syria, once strong allies, have been deteriorating since after the crisis began last year and Ankara became one of President Bashar Assad's harshest critics.

Although the conflict has left Syria internationally isolated, Iran has stood by Assad.

On Sunday, the top commander of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard says the elite unit has high-level advisers in Lebanon and Syria but remains undecided on whether to send military reinforcements to help save Assad's regime.

Sunday's comments by Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari were the clearest indication to date of Iran's direct assistance to its main Arab allies, Assad and Lebanon's Hezbollah. It also suggests Tehran is wary about being drawn into a Middle East conflict if outside forces attack Assad, who is locked in a civil war with rebel forces.

Jafari told reporters that Quds force members have been in Syria and Lebanon as advisers for a long time, but was not more specific.

He said decisions about whether to boost military aid to Syria if attacked would "depend on the circumstances."

Also Sunday, state-run news agency SANA said rebels detonated a 600 kilogram (1,320 pound) bomb under the highway near the southern town of Khirbet Ghazaleh. It said the bomb was detonated by remote control and cut the highway that links Damascus with the southern city of Daraa and the Jordanian capital of Amman.

The opposition Local Coordination Committees said seven people were killed and others wounded, although SANA put the toll at eight. SANA added that nine cars and two buses carrying state employees were damaged in the blast.

Residents in the province of Daraa reported Sunday that government troops have been surrounding hamlets in the region. They said the "troops are not allowing people to leave their area, not even to go to school." One, who identified himself as Abu Wassim, said his elementary-aged sons could not attend classes on the first day of school in the country.

Other residents said the Syrian military was inspecting houses and randomly arresting people in the province. They alleged the troops were insulting and beating, particularly young men, during the inspections. Also, they reported receiving threatening text messages on their mobile phones warning: "Armed people, hand yourselves in because our intrepid army is coming to get you."

Earlier in the day, government troops captured and cleared the neighborhood of Midan in the embattled northern city of Aleppo, SANA said, while activists reported that bombardment of rebel-held areas throughout the country claimed the lives of dozens of people.

SANA said troops also killed dozens of rebels in other parts of Aleppo, the country's largest city and commercial center. The LCC and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said many of the dead in Aleppo were killed in air raids on the rebel-held neighborhood of Shaar.

The fight for Aleppo, a city of 3 million that was once a bastion of support for Assad, is critical for both the regime and the opposition. Its fall would give the opposition a major strategic victory with a stronghold in the north near the Turkish border. A rebel defeat, at the very least, would buy Assad more time.

The Observatory also said troops shelled the Damascus neighborhood of Hajar Aswad, an area that has witnessed anti-government activities since the early weeks of the uprising. Sunday's nationwide death toll reached over 50 people, the Observatory added. It was the same day that the school year began for some five million students.

The Syrian uprising began with mostly peaceful protests in a number of the country's impoverished provinces. As security forces violently suppressed them, the protest grew and escalated into an increasingly armed insurrection. Activists say at least 23,000 people have been killed in the past 18 months.

On Sunday, the new international envoy tasked with ending the civil war, Lakhdar Brahimi, left Syria, ending a four-day visit during which he met with Assad and other officials, his office said in a statement. Brahimi summed up his first foray to Damascus Saturday with a startling and frank admission that he still has no plan for stopping the bloodshed which he warned could threaten world peace.

In Damascus, some 24 political parties and groups who describe themselves as opposition organizations gathered in an effort to seek national reconciliation and end violence in the country.

The participants, who included Deputy Prime Minister Qadri Jamil — head the opposition party Front of Change and Liberation, said in a statement that they aim to launch a pure Syrian dialogue and call for a national conference to be attended by all opposition groups from inside and outside the country.
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SCA

Karzai Denounces Coalition Over Airstrikes

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Matthew Rosenberg

KABUL, Afghanistan - Two of the most contentious issues dividing the United States and President Hamid Karzai's administration re-emerged as the Afghan leader condemned American-led forces for killing eight women in airstrikes on Sunday and denounced his American allies for continuing to hold hundreds of Afghan prisoners.

After the coalition initially said that it needed time to investigate Afghan reports of the deaths, by evening it confirmed that the civilians had died in airstrikes launched early Sunday in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan. It said the strikes were carried out "solely with the intent of countering known insurgents," and offered its sympathies to the families of those slain. It did not give a number of dead; Afghan officials said eight women who were out collecting firewood had died.

While Mr. Karzai's condemnation was likely to rankle some Western officials, it was in keeping with how he has responded to the killing of Afghan bystanders by both coalition forces and the Taliban, which is responsible for the vast majority of civilian deaths in Afghanistan. Instead, the presidential palace reserved its strongest language for the continued detention of some 600 Afghans at what was once the main American prison here. Mr. Karzai's office said in a statement that keeping the prisoners was a "serious breach" and a "serious violation" of a deal struck this year, under which the United States agreed to transfer control of the prison to Afghan authorities on Sept. 9.

"The continued holding of Afghans in American custody runs in contradiction with the spirit of mutual friendship," it said. "The people of Afghanistan consider the issue of prisons and detention of their fellow citizens a matter of their national sovereignty."

After a summer in which American and Afghan officials were more often than not on the same page, the confrontational tone of the statement was a sharp reminder of the acrimony that has often characterized relations between Mr. Karzai and his American benefactors. As recently as March, Mr. Karzai referred to Americans as "demons."

The statement came after Mr. Karzai met with Ambassador Marc Grossman, the United States special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, who was in Kabul on a previously unannounced visit. The men discussed the prison issue and stalled efforts to strike a peace deal with the Taliban, the palace said.

The Americans were holding roughly 3,000 people at the prison, which is next to Bagram Air Base north of Kabul, when the United States and Afghanistan signed a memorandum of understanding in March that laid out a six-month timetable for the transfer. But Afghan officials say 600 people detained since March remain in American custody, along with about 30 of the original prisoners considered too dangerous to release but too difficult to prosecute because of a lack of admissible evidence.

American officials have not said anything about the 600 figure, but they have acknowledged holding the men detained before the deal was struck. They also have said they want the Afghans to agree to detain those men indefinitely under stipulations in the Geneva Convention that permit wartime detentions without trial.

Sunday's statement from Mr. Karzai's office said Afghan judicial authorities would soon "express their views" on how or whether a system of indefinite detention would comply with Afghanistan's laws.

Rangin Dadfar Spanta, Afghanistan's national security adviser, said in an interview last week that the Afghan government would eventually implement such a system but wanted control of the prisoners immediately. The Americans want a guarantee that the Afghans will leave intact the American detention system that allows the indefinite holding of prisoners deemed dangerous if there is insufficient evidence to try them.

"It is like the egg and the chicken," said Mr. Spanta, who is viewed as one of Mr. Karzai's more pro-Western advisers. Mr. Spanta said in the interview that he needed "a little space, two or three days, to find a diplomatic solution." But with no solution at hand, the Karzai administration appeared to be taking the negotiations public with Sunday's statement.

In response, the American Embassy stressed that "there is no question of our commitment to fully implement" the prison transfer accord. "Ambassador Grossman made clear in his discussion with the president that the United States fully respects Afghan sovereignty," it said in a statement.

Sunday's civilian deaths were the latest case of innocents being caught up in an operation by the coalition, which has reduced civilian casualties in part by limiting the use of air power.

The airstrikes took place in the Alingar district of Laghman Province. The coalition said the strikes were called in around 2 a.m. during a firefight with insurgents that had been spotted moving through the area.

According to Maj. Lori Hodge of the Air Force, coalition forces "engaged with precision munitions and direct fire" - airstrikes and gunfire - with about 45 insurgents. She could not say how many insurgents were killed.

Coalition forces were apparently unaware that village women sometimes go into the woods in the early hours of the morning to fetch wood for cooking fires they need to have going by breakfast time.

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4 Troops Killed In Southern Afghanistan Insider Attack

September 17, 2012

[Washington Post](#)

By Richard Leiby And Greg Jaffe

KABUL, Afghanistan -Four U.S. troops were killed Sunday at a remote checkpoint in southern Afghanistan when a member of the Afghan security forces opened fire on them, military officials said. The attack brought to 51 the number of international troops shot dead by their Afghan partners this year.

The so-called insider attack came on the same day that NATO warplanes killed nine women gathering firewood in the mountains outside their village in an eastern province, local officials said, adding to long-festering outrage here over civilian casualties. Although the coalition said it regretted any civilian deaths, the incident was likely to further strain relations between Afghans and the international forces.

The weekend's events touched the core of the U.S.-led war's problems. The escalating insider attacks and continuing civilian casualties both deepen mistrust and alienate NATO forces from the people they're supposed to be protecting, undermining an already fragile partnership.

The Americans and their coalition partners are training Afghan forces to take over responsibility for the nation's security and enable the United States to pull out its combat troops by the end of 2014.

The American troops were killed Sunday near a NATO installation in Zabul province, at a checkpoint staffed by both foreign and Afghan forces. (The U.S. did not immediately release information on which service branch the troops belonged to.)

On Saturday, an Afghan gunman thought to belong to the local police killed two British soldiers in southern Helmand province.

The weekend killings marked an escalation of insider attacks on international troops here that coincided with Muslim rage worldwide that was sparked by a film that defames the Islamic prophet Muhammad. It was unclear, however, whether the shootings were connected to the unreleased "Innocence of Muslims" movie, snippets of which can be seen on the Internet.

Even so, the inflammatory movie, along with insider killings, have had a significant impact on U.S. military and Afghan Army operations in some areas over the past three days. Top NATO officers ordered their field commanders to conduct risk assessments and determine whether to postpone or scale back some missions in response to the recent Afghan anger.

In Wardak Province, a restive area south of Kabul, some commanders appeared to misinterpret the guidance and postponed several major operations for three days. Because Afghan Army commanders in Wardak Province were reluctant to patrol without support from U.S. troops, they also chose to cancel the planned missions.

The pause in Wardak Province had initially been planned for only two days, but U.S. commanders extended it in the immediate aftermath of a Friday night attack by the Taliban on Camp Bastion - a large British base in Helmand Province - so that U.S. troops could focus on internal-base security in case similar insider attacks were launched.

The Taliban said the attack on Camp Bastion, which is hundreds of miles from Wardak Province, was initiated to avenge the Islam-insulting movie and also meant to target Britain's Prince Harry, a helicopter gunner on the base. Two U.S. Marines died in the attack, and upwards of \$200 million in aircraft and base structures were destroyed.

Col. Thomas Collins, a spokesman for the NATO-backed International Security Assistance Force, confirmed the pause in some operations but said such readjustments are not unusual.

"Recent events outside of and inside Afghanistan related to the 'Innocence of Muslims' video plus the conduct of recent insider attacks have given cause for ISAF troops to exercise increased vigilance and carefully review all activities and interactions with the local population," Collins said in a statement.

Shooter is killed

The latest fatal insider attacks on U.S. troops involved a group of Afghans wearing the uniforms of the Afghan National Police - a component of the country's 352,000-member security forces. Jailani Khan Farahi, a senior police officer for Zabul province, said the assassin was a member of that force and worked closely with foreign troops in the area.

The shooter was killed in reciprocal firing and five of his colleagues fled, Farahi said. It was unclear whether the five were also involved in the killings.

In a statement on its Web site Sunday, the Taliban said four Americans died, crediting "one Afghan Mujahid," or holy warrior, for carrying out the attack.

NATO and Afghan officials have undertaken intense efforts recently to prevent the insider attacks. The Afghans say they have been weeding out potential turncoats and Taliban infiltrators through better screening; they also have increased counter-intelligence operations in the ranks and introduced cultural sensitivity training so that Afghan forces can better understand Western behaviors.

Taliban infiltrators are estimated to account for 25 percent of the insider attacks, with the rest attributed to Afghans' who are settling personal scores, avenging perceived humiliations or making larger statements against the international troop presence - including civilian casualties.

Airstrikes in mountains

Sunday's NATO airstrikes in the mountains of eastern Laghman province fueled further anger among Afghans - including President Hamid Karzai, who condemned the killings. The U.S.-led international coalition said the precision strikes killed about "a large number of insurgents" but also acknowledged that that up to eight civilians had been hit.

Chanting "Death to America," protesters deposited what local authorities said were the bodies of nine victims at the residence of the provincial governor, about 30 miles from where the strikes occurred. Seven other women and girls were reported to be injured.

"We strongly condemn it - killing innocent women is not justifiable at all," said Alif Shah, district governor of the province's Alingar District. "The operation was not coordinated with the Afghan authorities."

Doug Ollivant, a fellow at the New American Foundation and former National Security Council official, said such incidents contribute to insider attacks, but "I think the root cause is the perceived disrespect the Afghans get from their NATO allies and trainers."

As for the film, he said, "It probably isn't going to set you off if your honor isn't already being bruised."

Lt. Col. Hagen Messer, a coalition spokesman, said there was no evidence so far to suggest that the two insider attacks in two days had a connection to the controversial anti-Muslim film that has provoked protests and violence in some 20 countries.

"Every one of these insider attacks is handled as its own individual incident," Messer said. "We can't draw the conclusion that there is a single reason or point."

Since 2007, when the insider- attack phenomenon began, about 109 international troops have been killed by rogue Afghan security forces.

Last week, the Taliban called for increased attacks in Afghanistan, specifically on U.S. forces, to avenge the anti-Muslim film, as well as "all the violations against our heavenly book [the Koran]" and the Prophet Muhammad.

"The Mujahideen in Afghanistan should avenge these actions of the American government by dealing a heavy blow to its invading troops on the battlefield," an official Taliban Web site said.

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India Labels Anti-Islam Film "Offensive Material"

September 17, 2012

AFP

India on Sunday said that Google had blocked access in the country to an anti-Islam film which has triggered protests across the Muslim world as it condemned the "offensive" movie.

"Google India has, in compliance with Indian law, blocked access to the offensive material," foreign ministry spokesman Syed Akbaruddin said.

"India has always strongly condemned all acts that disparage religious beliefs and hurt religious sentiments," he said in a statement, adding that authorities were also "in touch with US officials who share our concerns on the matter".

A Google executive, speaking on condition of anonymity, said on Friday that it had blocked access to Internet users trying to watch the movie via YouTube which it owns.

More than 80 people were arrested in the southern city of Chennai on Friday after an attack by Islamists on the US consulate during a protest against the film.

India has reinforced security at the US embassy in New Delhi and consulates and diplomatic interests in other Indian cities as a precaution against possible protests.

India is home to world's third largest Muslim population after Indonesia and Pakistan.
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Pakistanis Try To Storm U.S. Outpost; One Is Killed

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Salman Masood

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - One person was killed and dozens of people were injured when anti-American protesters tried to storm the American Consulate in the southern port city of Karachi and clashed for several hours with the police and paramilitary troops on Sunday evening, rescue workers and police officials said.

The outbreak of violence came after days of peaceful demonstrations in Pakistan against the release of an American-made video mocking the Prophet Muhammad. Pakistani officials had increased security in all major cities before Friday Prayer services, which have in the past served as flash points for protests, and until Sunday, calm had prevailed. The American Embassy here said in a message posted Sunday evening on Twitter that "all American personnel are safe and accounted for at U.S. Consulate, Karachi."

"The United States government has absolutely nothing to do with this video," another Twitter message by the American Embassy said. "We reject its content and its message."

Karachi is Pakistan's commercial capital, and the sprawling city is frequently torn by ethnic and sectarian violence. "Things usually get out of hand in Karachi," Mehreen Zahra-Malik, an assistant editor at The News International, said in an interview.

The demonstration on Sunday was spearheaded by two groups of Shiites, a minority in Pakistan, which had urged demonstrators to march "toward" the American Consulate.

The police responded by blocking the road that leads to the American Consulate with concrete barriers and shipping containers on Sunday afternoon. Then, as the march neared, the police fired tear gas canisters into the crowd. That failed to contain waves of angry demonstrators, who grew increasingly agitated, witnesses said.

The police and Rangers, a force controlled by the Interior Ministry, then fired shots into the air as demonstrators rushed through the clouds of tear gas, trying to reach the outer boundary wall of the heavily fortified consulate building. Water cannons were also used on the protesters, who began hurling stones.

Local television broadcast images of young men falling on the roadside after being struck by water jets. One young man ran toward a police officer, who was firing warning shots in the air, and flung his arms open, daring the officer to shoot at his chest.

After battling for a few hours without entering the consulate property, the protesters dispersed. They later assembled in the Numaish Chowrangi neighborhood and staged a sit-in. Local news media reported that the demonstrators had set at least four police vehicles on fire.

Mirza Yousuf Hussain, the leader of one of the two Shiite groups that organized the protest, claimed that violence had broken out in Karachi after police opened fire on "peaceful protesters." He said in a statement that police fire had killed the brother of the deputy secretary general of his party's Karachi chapter. He also said two wounded workers were in critical condition. He accused high-ranking police officers of "working to protect American interests."

In the eastern city of Lahore, thousands of protesters took part in a demonstration led by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, the leader of the militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, which is accused of orchestrating the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. While the protest remained peaceful, the fiery speeches were filled with anger as protesters gathered at the Mall, about half a mile from the American Consulate in Lahore.

Mr. Saeed said in his speech that the production crew of the video "must be hanged to set an example."

Protesters held placards and shouted slogans against the United States government. One placard read, "O Obama, we are all Osama." Another placard read, "Blasphemy is not freedom of expression, and its sentence is death."

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WHA/EUR

Paris Prosecutor To Probe Protest At US Embassy

September 17, 2012

Associated Press

PARIS - The Paris prosecutor's office opened an investigation Sunday regarding a protest around the American Embassy that drew hundreds of people angry over of a film produced in the United States that insults the Prophet Muhammad.

In the wake of Saturday's unauthorized protest, uniformed and plain clothes police were added to the streets surrounding the embassy, police officer Pierre Coric said. Police detained 150 people as they broke up the demonstration; one was still in custody Sunday for roughing up an officer.

Between 200 and 250 people converged Saturday afternoon on the streets around the embassy, which is not far from the famed Champs-Elysees Avenue and France's presidential Elysee Palace. They were apparently responding to calls put out via text message and social media.

The prosecutor's office will look into how such a large demonstration was organized without the proper permits, according to spokeswoman Agnes Thibault Lecuire.

Interior Minister Manuel Valls has called the protest, which at one point saw dozens of men praying on the sidewalks, "unacceptable."

The demonstration was part of a wave of protests outside U.S. diplomatic posts around the world, some of which have turned violent. The U.S. Ambassador to Libya was killed during an attack on the consulate in Benghazi; protesters have also stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tunis and held violent demonstrations outside posts in Egypt and Sudan.

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Muslims Protest Outside US Embassy In London

September 17, 2012

AFP

LONDON - Hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside the United States embassy in London on Sunday to protest an anti-Islam film that has caused outrage throughout the Muslim world.

Around 300 men and women joined in the protest, waving placards and chanting slogans outside the embassy building in central London, an AFP photographer reported.

Demonstrators chanted "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest) and waved placards reading "USA dead" at the demonstration against the film, which has sparked sometimes violent protests in Muslim countries.

Furious protests targeting symbols of US influence have flared in cities such as Cairo in retaliation for the crude film made in the United States by a right-wing Christian group that ridicules the Prophet Mohammed.

In the worst incident of violence, the US ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, and three other Americans died when suspected Islamic militants fired rocket-propelled grenades at the US consulate in the eastern city of Benghazi.

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FOREIGN POLICY

On Web, A Fine Line On Free Speech Across The Globe

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Somini Sengupta

SAN FRANCISCO - For Google last week, the decision was clear. An anti-Islamic video that provoked violence worldwide was not hate speech under its rules because it did not specifically incite violence against Muslims, even if it mocked their faith.

The White House was not so sure, and it asked Google to reconsider the determination, a request the company rebuffed.

Although the administration's request was unusual, for Google, it represented the kind of delicate balancing act that Internet companies confront every day.

These companies, which include communications media like Facebook and Twitter, write their own edicts about what kind of expression is allowed, things as diverse as pointed political criticism, nudity and notions as murky as hate speech. And their employees work around the clock to check when users run afoul of their rules.

Google is not the only Internet company to grapple in recent days with questions involving the anti-Islamic video, which appeared on YouTube, which Google owns. Facebook on Friday confirmed that it had blocked links to the video in Pakistan, where it violates the country's blasphemy law. A spokeswoman said Facebook had also removed a post that contained a threat to a United States ambassador, after receiving a report from the State Department; Facebook has declined to say in which country the ambassador worked.

"Because these speech platforms are so important, the decisions they take become jurisprudence," said Andrew McLaughlin, who has worked for both Google and the White House. Most vexing among those decisions are ones that involve whether a form of expression is hate speech. Hate speech has no universally accepted definition, legal experts say. And countries, including democratic ones, have widely divergent legal approaches to regulating speech they consider to be offensive or inflammatory.

Europe bans neo-Nazi speech, for instance, but courts there have also banned material that offends the religious sensibilities of one group or another. Indian law frowns on speech that could threaten public order. Turkey can shut down a Web site that insults its founding president, Kemal Ataturk. Like the countries, the Internet companies have their own positions, which give them wide latitude on how to interpret expression in different countries.

Although Google says the anti-Islamic video, "Innocence of Muslims," was not hate speech, it restricted access to the video in Libya and Egypt because of the extraordinarily delicate situation on the ground and out of respect for cultural norms.

Google has not yet explained why its cultural norms edict applied to only two countries and not others, where Muslim sensitivities have been demonstrably offended.

Free speech absolutists say all expression, no matter how despicable, should be allowed online. Others say Internet companies, like governments, should be flexible enough to exercise restraint under exceptional circumstances, especially when lives are at stake.

At any rate, as Mark L. Movsesian, a law professor at St. John's University, pointed out, any effort to ban hateful or offensive speech worldwide would be virtually impossible, if not counterproductive.

"The regimes are so different, it's very, very difficult to come up with one answer - unless you ban everything," he said.

Google's fine parsing led to a debate in the blogosphere about whether the video constituted hateful or offensive speech.

Peter J. Spiro, a law professor at Temple University, said Google was justified in restricting access to the video in certain places, if for no other reason than to stanch the violence.

"Maybe the hate speech/offensive speech distinction can be elided by the smart folks in Google's foreign ministry," Mr. Spiro wrote on the blog *Opinio Juris*. "If material is literally setting off global firestorms through its dissemination online, Google will strategically pull the plug."

Every company, in order to do business globally, makes a point of obeying the laws of every country in which it operates. Google has already said that it took down links to the incendiary video in India and Indonesia, because it violates local statutes.

But even as a company sets its own rules, capriciously sometimes and without the due process that binds most countries, legal experts say they must be flexible to strike the right balance between democratic values and law.

"Companies are benevolent rulers trying to approximate the kinds of decisions they think would be respectful of free speech as a value and also human safety," said Jonathan Zittrain, a law professor at Harvard.

Unlike Google, Twitter does not explicitly address hate speech, but it says in its rule book that "users are allowed to post content, including potentially inflammatory content, provided they do not violate the Twitter Terms of Service and Rules." Those include a prohibition against "direct, specific threats of violence against others."

That wide margin for speech sometimes lands Twitter in feuds with governments and lobbyists. Twitter was pressed this summer to take down several accounts the Indian government considered offensive. Company officials agreed to remove only those that blatantly impersonated others; impersonation violates company rules, unless the user makes it clear that it is satirical.

Facebook has some of the industry's strictest rules. Terrorist organizations are not permitted on the social network, according to the company's terms of service. In recent years, the company has repeatedly shut down fan pages set up by Hezbollah.

In a statement after the killings of United States Embassy employees in Libya, the company said, "Facebook's policy prohibits content that threatens or organizes violence, or praises violent organizations."

Facebook also explicitly prohibits what it calls "hate speech," which it defines as attacking a person. In addition, it allows users to report content they find objectionable, which Facebook employees then vet. Facebook's algorithms also pick up certain words that are then sent to human inspectors to review; the company declined to provide details on what kinds of words set off that kind of review.

Nudity is forbidden on Facebook, too. This year, that policy enmeshed the social network in a controversy over photographs of breast-feeding women. Facebook pages were set up by groups that objected to the company's ban on pictures of exposed breasts, and "nurse-ins" were organized, calling on women to breast-feed outside Facebook offices worldwide.

The company said sharing breast-feeding photos was fine, but "photos that show a fully exposed breast where the child is not actively engaged in nursing do violate Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities."

Just this month, a New Yorker cartoon tripped over Facebook's rules on exposed breasts. On its Facebook page, the magazine displayed a cartoon that contained the topless figures of a man and women. The illustration was removed for violating Facebook's naked breast decree.

Facebook soon corrected itself. With "hundreds of thousands" of reported complaints each week, the company said, sometimes it makes a mistake.

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EDITORIAL / OPINION

The Video Did It

September 17, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

The Obama Administration dispatched Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice to the talk shows Sunday to explain the outbreak of anti-American protests in the Arab world. Her message: It's all the fault of that 13-minute anti-Islamic video on YouTube. U.S. policies or foreign terrorists have little or nothing to do with it.

"What sparked the recent violence was the airing on the Internet of a very hateful, very offensive video that has offended many people around the world," said Ms. Rice, a leading candidate to be Secretary of State in a second Obama term, on "Fox News Sunday."

While there is no excuse for violence, she added, "as we've seen in the past with things like 'Satanic Verses,' with the cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad, there have been such things that have sparked outrage and anger, and this has been the proximate cause of what we've seen last week."

This followed White House spokesman Jay Carney's remarks last week that the violent protests were a "response not to United States policy, not to, obviously, the administration, not to the American people" but were "in response to a video, a film, that we have judged to be reprehensible and disgusting."

Mr. Carney all but asked Google to pull the video from its YouTube subsidiary website as inconsistent with its "terms of use," as if an anti-American attack should result in American self-censorship. Google appropriately refused.

Ms. Rice did concede on ABC's "This Week" that the deadly attack on the U.S. consulate in Libya might have been the work of "individual clusters of extremists," but she added that it had begun merely as a spontaneous protest against the video.

That doesn't square with the view of Libyan officials, who say they believe the attack was the work of Islamists linked to al Qaeda. Peaceful protesters don't typically carry rocket-propelled grenades and

other heavy weapons to a demonstration. The fact that the attack happened on the anniversary of September 11 also suggests terrorist planning.

Ms. Rice's the-video-did-it explanation is no doubt intended to shield Obama Administration policies from any domestic political blame for the attacks. But far worse is the message it sends to adversaries and even friendly governments abroad: Overrun sovereign U.S. territory, even kill U.S. diplomats, and the first reaction of the American government will be to blame Americans for somehow provoking the violence.

Ms. Rice's reference to the 1988 novel "The Satanic Verses" is especially unfortunate since Iran issued a fatwa urging the murder of author Salman Rushdie. Ms. Rice is suggesting that what matters is whether Muslims take offense against some Western statement or work, regardless of its value as art or free-expression. We wonder how Mr. Rushdie feels about having his work linked to the trashy and insulting video "Innocence of Muslims" as a provocation for violence.

It's one thing for the U.S. government to say it isn't responsible for and disapproves of an anti-Islamic video. But it's another to say the video is the reason for anti-American violence. Eleven years after 9/11 and 33 years after the Iranian revolution, it should be obvious that there is no end to the insults that Islamic radicals can imagine or cite as an excuse to foment anti-American, anti-Western protests and violence.

The far greater provocation to violence is the appearance of U.S. weakness. What should really concern the White House is how slow and parsimonious were the denunciations of anti-American violence in Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan, Yemen and most of the rest of the Middle East. The Administration's feeble response in the last week only invites radicals to use more such excuses to kill more Americans.
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Amid Chants of 'Free Libya, Terrorists Out,' a Nation at a Crossroads

September 17, 2012

Wall Street Journal

By JASON PACK And ANDREA KHALIL

Benghazi, Libya – Sept. 11 is now a date that signifies a national tragedy for Libya as well as the United States. The attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi that killed four Americans, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens, has upset the delicate political transition from dictatorship to democracy that was unfolding here. It also has obscured parliament's prudent selection Wednesday of Mustafa Abushagour—a moderate Islamist and respected technocrat—as prime minister. Yet spontaneous street demonstrations throughout the week denouncing the attack and seeking to pressure the government to act against its perpetrators suggest that Libyans are determined to build an inclusive society, free from fear.

We knew Ambassador Stevens personally and he was the best kind of American diplomat—charismatic, not bureaucratic, and fluent in Arab culture. He was in Benghazi from the beginning of last year's uprising against Moammar Gadhafi and forged irreplaceable personal ties with top rebel leaders.

On Wednesday night in Tree Square in Benghazi, we witnessed crowds expressing heartfelt disappointment, shouting slogans like, "Free Libya, terrorists out!" On Saturday, Libyan President Mohamed Magariaf told "NBC Nightly News" that non-Libyans were among those involved. The assertion dovetails with educated opinion here that the attack on the mission must have been planned

by an al Qaeda affiliate in revenge for the U.S. drone killing of the Libyan-born al Qaeda leader Abu Yahya al-Libi in Pakistan in June. Few demonstrators we talked to knew about the alleged justification for storming the consulate—the hateful 13-minute YouTube video "The Innocence of Muslims." Among those who did, a minority incorrectly assumed that if the video was produced in the U.S., it must represent American public opinion or tacit government policy.

Most Libyan popular opinion is more nuanced. Based on our dozens of interviews in Benghazi, most Libyans are appalled by the consulate attack. One female medical student at a Benghazi demonstration captured the mood: "The Americans are guests in our country and Islam requires us to treat them well."

According to a recent Gallup poll, Libyans hold a more favorable attitude toward Americans than they do even toward Canadians. As days have passed since the attack, Libyan popular condemnation has increased. A meeting took place on Thursday evening at the Shbelia Hotel to coordinate citizen action against the militants. The people who attended also wanted to goad the government into reining in the myriad militias that fought Gadhafi and have deepened their hold on local politics since his ouster. According to one activist, "There is no government response—because there is no government."

There is a small anti-American minority who support using the YouTube video to advance their militant agenda. On Wednesday night, they staged a small counterdemonstration in front of the Tibisti Hotel, where most foreigners stay. It consisted of about 50 men with Salafist black banners advocating more anti-Western violence.

On Friday, there were competing demonstrations around Benghazi. Women staged a peaceful antimilitant, pro-American demonstration in front of the Tibisti Hotel. Partisans of the militant group Ansar al-Sharia confronted them, dispersing the women. The demonstrations have dissolved without further violence.

Although some Libyan police died heroically resisting the consulate attackers, it still isn't clear if the ill-trained Libyan security forces did all they could to halt the attack. Symptomatic of the good and bad in the new Libya, there was no police or governmental presence at any of the protests we attended.

Last week Prime Minister Abushagour condemned the attack, expressing solidarity with the U.S. and promising to bring the criminals to justice. On Friday Benghazi's airport was closed to try to prevent suspects from escaping. About 50 arrests have already been made, but experts doubt that Libyan authorities have the firepower or know-how to tackle all the nonstate actors involved. The attack on the U.S. diplomatic post has also added to the perception that the Libyan government doesn't control its territory. Such popular doubt fuels decreasing public willingness to cooperate with authorities.

The U.S. can respond in three ways to the attack and its aftermath. It can cut and run, as in Lebanon in 1984. It can conduct a punitive counterterror expedition in coordination with Libyan authorities—although this would have to rely on Predator drones and risks prompting revenge attacks.

Or the U.S. can help Libya build institutions to strengthen its new foundations. Although the U.S. already has a small footprint—training Libyan security personnel, engineers and English-language students—such efforts could be increased. Such an effort would help create jobs and get potential extremists and militia off the streets.

In the words of Sen. John McCain, "Libya is wealthy. It does not need our money. . . . It needs our technical expertise." Based on our observation, popular sentiment in Libya longs for increased international cooperation.

If America abandons the country or lashes out in revenge, security and stability will deteriorate, foreign investment will dry up, and the Libyan economy will stagnate.

America wisely played a supporting role in ending the Gadhafi dictatorship. In the struggle for post-Gadhafi Libya, the U.S. cannot be silent. Only intense engagement can help restore momentum to the political transition already under way.

Mr. Pack is a researcher of Middle Eastern History at the University of Cambridge. He is president of Libya-Analysis.com. Mrs. Khalil is an associate professor at CUNY. She is currently traveling in Libya while on a Fulbright Scholarship to Tunisia.

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Bigotry, Both Fringe And State-sanctioned

September 16, 2012

Boston Globe

By Joanna Weiss

IF YOU HAVEN'T seen the 13-minute YouTube trailer of "Innocence of Muslims," it's worth a look, if only to witness the ultimate collision of bigotry and bad production values. Posted to YouTube last summer, dubbed recently into Arabic, the video features an Ashton Kutcher type as a murderous and lecherous Mohammed. It's filmed on a green screen so crude that, at times, the characters seem to be floating above the desert sands.

Andrew Goldberg, a filmmaker, watched the clip in his New York office with his production staff last week and thought, at first, that it was a joke. "I've seen an awful lot of Middle Eastern filmmaking, and at its absolute worst, it's not this bad. This is singular," he told me. One of the editors of Goldberg's 2007 film "Anti-Semitism in the 21st Century" had a similar reaction on Facebook: "'Horseman Without a Horse' blows this one out of the water."

He was referring to a 41-part miniseries that first aired on Egyptian state television - a kind of anti-Semitic flip side to "Innocence of Muslims," albeit with better acting and lighting. According to the Anti-Defamation League, the series was based on a hoax known as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which describes a Jewish conspiracy to rule the world. It includes such timeworn falsehoods as the notion that Jews kill Christian children and use their blood to make matzoh.

And it's one key to understanding how an obscure YouTube video could launch international riots.

At the time this column went to press, it still wasn't clear precisely who made or financed "Innocence of Muslims"; some of the actors have declared that they didn't even know the film was going to be about Islam. It also wasn't clear what role the trailer played in the deadly attacks on the US Consulate in Benghazi.

But as protests spread across the Middle East, it was clear that many were viewing the clip not as a laughable production by a fringe group of extremists, but as something sanctioned by the US

government. That's why the US Embassy in Egypt issued a statement - before anyone was killed - attempting to distance the US government from the actions of a few bigoted people in America.

How such a statement amounts to an "apology for America" is one of those enduring mysteries of Mitt Romney. Still, even Mitt seems to accept as self-evident, as most Americans do, that anyone can post a clip on YouTube, without government involvement or approval.

But free speech may be harder to understand on the Middle Eastern street, when some of the most virulent prejudice does, in fact, come sanctioned by the state. That's the context of "Horseman Without a Horse," which also aired on other networks throughout the Middle East - and was described, in the Egyptian press, as true.

As Goldberg points out, this is standard practice among oppressive regimes: diverting attention from the government's misdeeds by focusing on a scapegoat. One certain impediment to Middle Eastern peace is the official dissemination of anti-Semitic hatred. Children grow up with state-approved propaganda and little access to counterexamples. Bigotry becomes ingrained. This spring "Horseman" was scheduled to be rebroadcast on Egypt's privately owned Al-Tahrir TV.

Yes, there are some bigots in America, too. And, yes, there's a huge difference between producing an offensive movie and taking part in a violent mob. But if enough Middle Easterners equate the American fringe with the US government, we have a problem. Especially if people are already inclined to see our government as all-powerful.

As a reporter years ago, I covered the recovery of an EgyptAir jet that plummeted into Nantucket Sound. Many relatives of the victims, reared in Egypt, didn't understand why the mighty United States couldn't retrieve intact bodies from the bottom of the sea. "It's so easy for them - 270 feet? It's nothing for them," one victim's cousin said at the time. "All this technology? They can't find anything from the plane?"

The flip side of American strength is the notion that our government is in total control - that it can make anything happen, even a movie that's embarrassingly bad. Explaining our messy, complex culture of free speech will be an increasingly critical task. As Romney ought to know, that's what diplomacy is for.
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A Preventable Massacre

September 17, 2012

New York Times

By Seth Anziska

ON the night of Sept. 16, 1982, the Israeli military allowed a right-wing Lebanese militia to enter two Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut. In the ensuing three-day rampage, the militia, linked to the Maronite Christian Phalange Party, raped, killed and dismembered at least 800 civilians, while Israeli flares illuminated the camps' narrow and darkened alleyways. Nearly all of the dead were women, children and elderly men.

Thirty years later, the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila camps is remembered as a notorious chapter in modern Middle Eastern history, clouding the tortured relationships among Israel, the United States, Lebanon and the Palestinians. In 1983, an Israeli investigative commission concluded that Israeli leaders

were "indirectly responsible" for the killings and that Ariel Sharon, then the defense minister and later prime minister, bore "personal responsibility" for failing to prevent them.

While Israel's role in the massacre has been closely examined, America's actions have never been fully understood. This summer, at the Israel State Archives, I found recently declassified documents that chronicle key conversations between American and Israeli officials before and during the 1982 massacre. The verbatim transcripts reveal that the Israelis misled American diplomats about events in Beirut and bullied them into accepting the spurious claim that thousands of "terrorists" were in the camps. Most troubling, when the United States was in a position to exert strong diplomatic pressure on Israel that could have ended the atrocities, it failed to do so. As a result, Phalange militiamen were able to murder Palestinian civilians, whom America had pledged to protect just weeks earlier.

Israel's involvement in the Lebanese civil war began in June 1982, when it invaded its northern neighbor. Its goal was to root out the Palestine Liberation Organization, which had set up a state within a state, and to transform Lebanon into a Christian-ruled ally. The Israel Defense Forces soon besieged P.L.O.-controlled areas in the western part of Beirut. Intense Israeli bombardments led to heavy civilian casualties and tested even President Ronald Reagan, who initially backed Israel. In mid-August, as America was negotiating the P.L.O.'s withdrawal from Lebanon, Reagan told Prime Minister Menachem Begin that the bombings "had to stop or our entire future relationship was endangered," Reagan wrote in his diaries.

The United States agreed to deploy Marines to Lebanon as part of a multinational force to supervise the P.L.O.'s departure, and by Sept. 1, thousands of its fighters - including Yasir Arafat - had left Beirut for various Arab countries. After America negotiated a cease-fire that included written guarantees to protect the Palestinian civilians remaining in the camps from vengeful Lebanese Christians, the Marines departed Beirut, on Sept. 10.

Israel hoped that Lebanon's newly elected president, Bashir Gemayel, a Maronite, would support an Israeli-Christian alliance. But on Sept. 14, Gemayel was assassinated. Israel reacted by violating the cease-fire agreement. It quickly occupied West Beirut - ostensibly to prevent militia attacks against the Palestinian civilians. "The main order of the day is to keep the peace," Begin told the American envoy to the Middle East, Morris Draper, on Sept. 15. "Otherwise, there could be pogroms."

By Sept. 16, the I.D.F. was fully in control of West Beirut, including Sabra and Shatila. In Washington that same day, Under Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger told the Israeli ambassador, Moshe Arens, that "Israel's credibility has been severely damaged" and that "we appear to some to be the victim of deliberate deception by Israel." He demanded that Israel withdraw from West Beirut immediately.

In Tel Aviv, Mr. Draper and the American ambassador, Samuel W. Lewis, met with top Israeli officials. Contrary to Prime Minister Begin's earlier assurances, Defense Minister Sharon said the occupation of West Beirut was justified because there were "2,000 to 3,000 terrorists who remained there." Mr. Draper disputed this claim; having coordinated the August evacuation, he knew the number was minuscule. Mr. Draper said he was horrified to hear that Mr. Sharon was considering allowing the Phalange militia into West Beirut. Even the I.D.F. chief of staff, Rafael Eitan, acknowledged to the Americans that he feared "a relentless slaughter."

On the evening of Sept. 16, the Israeli cabinet met and was informed that Phalange fighters were entering the Palestinian camps. Deputy Prime Minister David Levy worried aloud: "I know what the

meaning of revenge is for them, what kind of slaughter. Then no one will believe we went in to create order there, and we will bear the blame." That evening, word of civilian deaths began to filter out to Israeli military officials, politicians and journalists.

At 12:30 p.m. on Sept. 17, Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir hosted a meeting with Mr. Draper, Mr. Sharon and several Israeli intelligence chiefs. Mr. Shamir, having reportedly heard of a "slaughter" in the camps that morning, did not mention it.

The transcript of the Sept. 17 meeting reveals that the Americans were browbeaten by Mr. Sharon's false insistence that "terrorists" needed "mopping up." It also shows how Israel's refusal to relinquish areas under its control, and its delays in coordinating with the Lebanese National Army, which the Americans wanted to step in, prolonged the slaughter.

Mr. Draper opened the meeting by demanding that the I.D.F. pull back right away. Mr. Sharon exploded, "I just don't understand, what are you looking for? Do you want the terrorists to stay? Are you afraid that somebody will think that you were in collusion with us? Deny it. We denied it." Mr. Draper, unmoved, kept pushing for definitive signs of a withdrawal. Mr. Sharon, who knew Phalange forces had already entered the camps, cynically told him, "Nothing will happen. Maybe some more terrorists will be killed. That will be to the benefit of all of us." Mr. Shamir and Mr. Sharon finally agreed to gradually withdraw once the Lebanese Army started entering the city - but they insisted on waiting 48 hours (until the end of Rosh Hashana, which started that evening).

Continuing his plea for some sign of an Israeli withdrawal, Mr. Draper warned that critics would say, "Sure, the I.D.F. is going to stay in West Beirut and they will let the Lebanese go and kill the Palestinians in the camps."

Mr. Sharon replied: "So, we'll kill them. They will not be left there. You are not going to save them. You are not going to save these groups of the international terrorism."

Mr. Draper responded: "We are not interested in saving any of these people." Mr. Sharon declared: "If you don't want the Lebanese to kill them, we will kill them."

Mr. Draper then caught himself, and backtracked. He reminded the Israelis that the United States had painstakingly facilitated the P.L.O. exit from Beirut "so it wouldn't be necessary for you to come in." He added, "You should have stayed out."

Mr. Sharon exploded again: "When it comes to our security, we have never asked. We will never ask. When it comes to existence and security, it is our own responsibility and we will never give it to anybody to decide for us." The meeting ended with an agreement to coordinate withdrawal plans after Rosh Hashana.

By allowing the argument to proceed on Mr. Sharon's terms, Mr. Draper effectively gave Israel cover to let the Phalange fighters remain in the camps. Fuller details of the massacre began to emerge on Sept. 18, when a young American diplomat, Ryan C. Crocker, visited the gruesome scene and reported back to Washington.

Years later, Mr. Draper called the massacre "obscene." And in an oral history recorded a few years before his death in 2005, he remembered telling Mr. Sharon: "You should be ashamed. The situation is

absolutely appalling. They're killing children! You have the field completely under your control and are therefore responsible for that area."

On Sept. 18, Reagan pronounced his "outrage and revulsion over the murders." He said the United States had opposed Israel's invasion of Beirut, both because "we believed it wrong in principle and for fear that it would provoke further fighting." Secretary of State George P. Shultz later admitted that "we are partially responsible" because "we took the Israelis and the Lebanese at their word." He summoned Ambassador Arens. "When you take military control over a city, you're responsible for what happens," he told him. "Now we have a massacre."

But the belated expression of shock and dismay belies the Americans' failed diplomatic effort during the massacre. The transcript of Mr. Draper's meeting with the Israelis demonstrates how the United States was unwittingly complicit in the tragedy of Sabra and Shatila.

Ambassador Lewis, now retired, told me that the massacre would have been hard to prevent "unless Reagan had picked up the phone and called Begin and read him the riot act even more clearly than he already did in August - that might have stopped it temporarily." But "Sharon would have found some other way" for the militiamen to take action, Mr. Lewis added.

Nicholas A. Veliotis, then the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, agreed. "Vintage Sharon," he said, after I read the transcript to him. "It is his way or the highway."

The Sabra and Shatila massacre severely undercut America's influence in the Middle East, and its moral authority plummeted. In the aftermath of the massacre, the United States felt compelled by "guilt" to redeploy the Marines, who ended up without a clear mission, in the midst of a brutal civil war.

On Oct. 23, 1983, the Marine barracks in Beirut were bombed and 241 Marines were killed. The attack led to open warfare with Syrian-backed forces and, soon after, the rapid withdrawal of the Marines to their ships. As Mr. Lewis told me, America left Lebanon "with our tail between our legs."

The archival record reveals the magnitude of a deception that undermined American efforts to avoid bloodshed. Working with only partial knowledge of the reality on the ground, the United States feebly yielded to false arguments and stalling tactics that allowed a massacre in progress to proceed.

The lesson of the Sabra and Shatila tragedy is clear. Sometimes close allies act contrary to American interests and values. Failing to exert American power to uphold those interests and values can have disastrous consequences: for our allies, for our moral standing and most important, for the innocent people who pay the highest price of all.

Seth Anziska is a doctoral candidate in international history at Columbia University.

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Syria: The Assad Family Business

September 16, 2012

[Boston Globe](#)

By Farah Stockman

IF YOU'VE BEEN watching Syria's descent into chaos over the past 16 months, you might have been plagued by a single question: Why doesn't Bashar Assad just get on a plane and leave?

Generals have defected. Diplomats have quit. Even Bashar's childhood best friend snuck out of the country. But Bashar himself shows no sign of giving up. In fact, no one in his extensive family tree appears to have jumped ship.

Look closely at Syria's economy and the reason becomes clear: From telecoms to banks to the oil industry, the Assad family owns Syria - and they intend to hang onto their investment. To Bashar, Syria is a family business. He doesn't just have himself to think about. He has his brother, his sister, his cousins, his uncles and aunts.

The story about how the Assads came to acquire a majority stake in every major private enterprise in the country is the story behind the Syrian uprising itself. Bashar Assad came to power promising economic reforms. But the reforms he enacted produced a rebellion.

Hafez Assad, Bashar's father, ran Syria the old Soviet way. Back in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, there was only one bank - the Central Bank of Syria. There were only two television channels, both owned by the state. People weren't allowed to own a fax machine or buy a car on the open market. Luxury goods were taxed 200 percent.

Getting ahead in the old Syria meant working your way up the Ba'ath Party. As a kid, you went to holiday camps run by the Ba'athist youth organization. Then you joined the local branch of the party. If you were loyal enough, or had made the right friends within the security services, you might land a job at a state-run factory. Being a Ba'athist in the old Syria meant getting little perks: the breadmaker would deliver your bread faster than your neighbor's. Or you could slip in a luxury good at the airport, tax free.

The system was built so that the lowest-level government employee could get a little piece of the corruption, "in order to make him believe he is part of the game," Kamal al-Labwani, a Syria doctor once imprisoned by the regime, wrote me in an e-mail.

When Hafez died in 2000, his son Bashar - a British-educated eye doctor - promised change. The Soviet Union had already crumbled. Even Mother Russia was treating its oligarchs to Mercedes and perfume.

So Bashar began to allow some private companies and schools. The Internet came. So did duty-free stores.

"There was an explosion of high-end restaurants and cafes," said Steven Heydemann, a Syria specialist at the US Institute of Peace. "People could live quite well if they had money."

The problem was that nobody did have money, except for Bashar's relatives and friends. They were the only ones who got licenses to buy into the burgeoning empire of private enterprise. Like his father, Bashar saw Syria as a personal possession. But instead of contenting himself with dreary, Soviet parastatals, Bashar wanted shiny, new private enterprises.

It started with cellphones. In 1998, the regime approached Farid Ghadry, a Syrian-American businessman in Maryland, to ask him to bid on the first private telecom license.

"Knowing the system, I knew I had zero chance of getting it," recalled Ghadry, who has since started an opposition party.

Sure enough, in 2000, the Ba'ath party granted a cell monopoly to Bashar's mother, Anisa Makhoulf. Over time, it went to his cousin, Rami Makhoulf, who became the owner of Syriatel, the country's largest telecom.

The monopoly sparked outrage. Riad Seif, a businessman and member of parliament, called it a "big scandal." (The regime fined him \$2 million and forced his factory into bankruptcy.)

But cellphones were just the beginning. Private newspapers, banks, and universities followed. Whatever the venture, Rami Makhoulf seemed to have a stake in it.

"There is saying in Syria: If you are a businessman, you have to be from the Makhoulf family, or you are against the law," said Radwan Ziadeh, director of the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Washington.

A US Treasury official said that Rami Makhoulf is widely considered a "front man" for Bashar Assad - the caretaker for the family fortune.

"Rami Makhoulf is one of the most hated people in Syria," the Treasury official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "He would take over businesses as he saw fit, or force owners to give him the majority share."

The corruption was so flagrant that President George W. Bush issued an executive order sanctioning Rami Makhoulf in 2008 as part of a widely successful broader policy of going after corrupt regimes.

But the Assads continued to grow their wealth by pulling merchant families in Aleppo and Damascus into their ventures. In 2007, two holding companies were set up - al-Cham and Al-Sourya - comprised of more than 70 favored businessmen.

Al-Cham got a 40-year license to build a mall, an airport, and railway service, as well as a stake in the country's first private power plant. Al-Sourya scored a Ministry of Tourism contract to operate a bus station in downtown Damascus.

These holding companies were vital tools for the regime, according to Caroline Donati, a Syria specialist who details their activities in a chapter of a forthcoming book, "Middle East Authoritarianism," by Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders.

The new companies procured much-needed foreign investment and political support, she wrote. Bashar also tied the new business class to the fortunes of the regime so they could never become dissenters. Some families didn't want to invest with the regime, but were forced to do so anyway.

Disentangling the regime from its business partners is now a key goal of US sanctions. If Syria's tight clique of entrepreneurs could be separated from the Assad family fortune, US officials reason, then maybe support for Bashar will evaporate.

US officials have slapped sanctions on many of the regime's business partners.

"The idea of targeting them was to tell them, 'You have a choice. You are either in bed with the Assad regime, isolated from the rest of the world, or you save yourself,' " said a US Treasury official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. She said it is working: "We have definitely seen some business elite shy away from the regime. Some of the clique moved their assets abroad, and prepared exit plans."

But Bashar's crony capitalism started to backfire even before US sanctions, collapsing under the sheer weight and ostentatiousness of the wealth itself.

Low-level Ba'ath party hacks - who used to have the good life because they got bread quicker than everybody else - started to realize the new system left them out.

The uprising began last year in the city of Deraa, a former Ba'ath party stronghold.

Some say the popular anger started when Rami Makhoulf tried to force people there to sell him a factory that makes Turkish Delight sweets. Others say the problem started when his company, Syriatel, tried to take over part of a school.

However it started, we do know this: Teens wrote anti-government graffiti and were arrested and tortured. The city rose up in protest. As protests mounted, Rami Makhoulf announced that he was offering shares of Syriatel to the poor, and focusing on charity work.

But it was too late. Demonstrations spread. Rioters burned Syriatel stores.

"The [low-level Ba'ath party] guy who was breaking the bread line never got anything out of privatization," Ghadry said. "He saw the riches, the wealth, the cars. Worse than that, he saw pictures on Facebook of Assad and his wife sporting \$4,000 shoes and handbags that cost as much as his apartment. That put the whole thing into perspective."

Bashar brought an new era of money and glamour to Syria, but also the impossibility for an ordinary person to achieve it. Is it any wonder that the ordinary people rose up?

And is it any wonder that the Assads can't break free from the financial web they created? Bashar's whole family is implicated in the regime's crimes now, Heydemann said: "There is no exit strategy for them."

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In An Islamist Egypt, Can Diversity Survive?

September 16, 2012

Los Angeles Times

By Michael Wahid Hanna And Elijah Zarwan

Egypt is now set to enter arguably its first period of Islamist rule. How long that period lasts and what form it takes is far from determined, a situation highlighted by the protests and violence in Cairo last week. If all goes according to plan - a big "if" in Egypt - Egyptians who believe in a democratic, civil state theoretically have the remainder of President Mohamed Morsi's term of office to get their collective act together.

But practically speaking, the short-term political calendar will not allow them such a lengthy reprieve, with the likelihood of new parliamentary elections in the coming months and the current debate over a new constitution. Although broad-based national political action requires patient grass-roots organizational efforts that will take years, the current phase of the country's transition will go a long way toward fashioning a new legal and political order.

If non-Islamists and liberals hope to preserve any chance of having a role in shaping the nation's future, a constructive, engaged and coordinated opposition will have to emerge. Those who truly believe in a civil, democratic state must overcome two bad habits: sniping from the sidelines, as they did under Hosni Mubarak, and splitting into factions, as they have since time immemorial.

Following the heady days of Egypt's uprising, the story of the country's transition has largely been dictated by the struggle for power between the Muslim Brotherhood and its military interlocutors. To the extent these two traditional antagonists have been able to reach stable accommodations and pacts, they have largely held sway.

We may never know what happened in the corridors of power in the days leading up to Morsi's surprise military shake-up in August. However, whether through acquiescence or outright collaboration, Morsi appears to have made his peace with enough of the remaining senior leadership now that the obstinate, old military brass has been swept aside. The exact parameters of that accommodation between civilian and military leaders will evolve over time, and the armed forces will undoubtedly remain an important center of authority.

But now that Morsi has apparently settled the question of whether he or the generals run domestic affairs, Egypt's non-Islamists and liberals can no longer hide behind the military. Their strategy of making Faustian bargains with the generals, of sacrificing "some" democracy in exchange for a "civil" (non-religious) state, has been shown to be as ineffective as it was morally bankrupt.

Preaching to Muslim Brotherhood politicians that they should be less Islamist or less politically self-serving has proved to be naive and ineffectual. The conduct of these politicians since the fall of Mubarak makes it clear that they seek to consolidate power and to implement their agenda - an Islamist agenda.

Furthermore, with significant pressure from more rigid Salafist elements to his right, as was vividly on display in aspects of last week's demonstrations at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Morsi will face stiff challenges if he does shift course and seek a more inclusive approach to governance.

In the meantime, Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood are carving out control of as much of the state as they can. No doubt they see these steps as necessary for implementing their plans for reform and delivering on their promises of a better life for Egyptians. Be that as it may, there is currently no credible institutional check on their power to make domestic policy.

It would be foolhardy for Egyptian opposition leaders, however, to again place their faith in the ability of the military to serve as a check on the ambitions of the Muslim Brotherhood. Such authority, to the extent that it might exist, is inherently undemocratic and lacks transparency. Similarly, the opposition should take no great comfort in the ability of bottom-up pressure generated by mass mobilization and public protest to serve as a barrier to the monopolization of power and the abuse of authority. In a weary society craving a modicum of stability, such public shows of force may never again be re-created.

But despite its dominant position in Egyptian politics today, the electoral strength of the Muslim Brotherhood should not be taken as a given. The demands of leadership, the magnitude of Egypt's challenges and the high expectations of the populace have already begun to erode its widespread popularity. The fluidity of political dynamics and the shallowness of party allegiances were clearly on display in the first round of the presidential elections, when Morsi won only a quarter of the vote.

While not losing sight of longer-term efforts to expand their popular appeal and to establish nationwide political organizations, the Egyptian opposition must take immediate steps to counteract the president's de facto monopoly on formal political power. Liberals must cohere around a core set of constitutional demands: equal rights for all citizens, religious freedom, separation of powers, rule of law and issues of due process.

At this sensitive moment in Egypt's history, consensus-driven decisions taken by a broadly inclusive coalition stand the best chance of enduring and ensuring the political stability Egypt needs to recover economically.

Toward that end, Morsi would do well to remember his promises to be "a president for all Egyptians," mindful of the fact that a majority of those who voted for him in the runoffs preferred someone else in the first round. His political rivals would do well to cooperate with him and the Brotherhood to meet the serious practical challenges Egypt faces, to present themselves as credible alternatives rather than only as armchair critics, and to keep the agenda focused on solving the country's problems. To the extent opportunities arise, Morsi's opponents should meet him halfway, cooperating on those issues on which they can agree while articulating a positive alternative on those issues where they do not.

Michael Wahid Hanna is a fellow at the Century Foundation. Elijah Zarwan is a fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

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Colombia Gambles on Talks With the FARC

September 17, 2012

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By MARY ANASTASIA O'GRADY

No one I know of has ever calculated the net present value of future cash flows from the drug-trafficking activities of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). It would be a good number to have as Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos embarks on the fourth attempt in 30-some years to reach a peace accord with the legendary terrorists.

Getting the FARC to renounce organized crime will be crucial to a successful outcome. That implies a buyout.

The news that the Santos administration has been engaged for more than a year in secret talks with the FARC was leaked to the press on Aug. 27. That prompted the release of a three-page document, signed Aug. 26 in Havana, spelling out the issues the two sides have agreed will be on the table when they meet in Oslo in October. These include political participation, an end to conflict and solving the problem of drug trafficking. Cuba and Norway are to provide the venues for the talks, with Venezuela and Chile as observers.

The national reaction to Mr. Santos's efforts to reach a settlement with the FARC has run the gamut from hope and enthusiasm to suspicion and downright rejection. A recent poll by Ipsos Napoleón Franco found that 77% of Colombians approve of the president's decision to open talks.

But key opinion makers, including former President Alvaro Uribe, are not so eager to proceed. Many ask why the government should negotiate with Marxist criminals who have not put down their weapons, still hold kidnap victims and continue to murder civilians. To further illustrate its lack of good faith, the FARC recently released a rap video that appears to taunt Mr. Santos. It asserts that he was forced to ask for the negotiation because he could not prevail militarily.

All of this demonstrates the magnitude of risk that the Colombian president is taking. FARC land mines are everywhere.

That a majority of Colombians are open to the outreach for peace isn't surprising. The nation is weary of more than five decades of guerrilla violence, and Mr. Santos earned its trust as Mr. Uribe's defense minister from 2006 to 2009. During his tenure he proved to be a brilliant military strategist capable of hitting the enemy decisively. His government says that it has eliminated the FARC's top two leaders and killed or captured 18 other commanders.

It is therefore hard to buy into charges that the president has gone soft on terror. Mr. Santos knows better than anyone that if he does not secure a full FARC capitulation, it will use "peace" to ratchet up war. When Mr. Uribe's predecessor negotiated with the rebels, they used a government-sanctioned safe haven to stockpile weapons, hold kidnap victims and plot attacks.

In a telephone interview last week from Bogotá, the president told me that the rebels approached him about talking, and he felt a responsibility to pursue the possibility of peace because even in its weakened state the FARC will menace the population for years to come.

Mr. Santos said he made clear from the start that there would be no safe haven and no bilateral cease-fire. He also said that any negotiation would last months, not years and that private property, military operations and state policies, like taxes, are nonnegotiable. His negotiating team of five includes a former police chief, a former armed-forces commander, and the president of a chamber of commerce, all pillars of the democratic community.

Considering all this, the process sounds safe enough. Yet there are also many reasons to be wary, especially with the involvement, however passive, of the Cuban military dictatorship.

One legitimate concern for those who know the FARC is the Santos-sponsored "law for restitution of land" passed earlier this year. It opens the door to lawsuits by individuals who claim that they lost property in the conflict at gunpoint and puts the burden of proof of how land was acquired on the current owner. There is also a new promise to compensate victims of human-rights violations perpetrated by parties other than the state. State crimes were already covered.

Both appear to have been done to smooth the negotiations by ensuring the FARC and its operatives, who are sworn enemies of many large landholders and have long coveted their property, that they can make their way into the courts.

But Colombia's justice system is unreliable, and left-wing nongovernmental organizations have repeatedly demonstrated their skill in dredging up bribed or intimidated witnesses to win cases. What good are military victories on the battlefield if the terrorists are able to use the legal system to seize property, force huge government payouts, and destroy the lives and livelihoods of the armed forces?

Talking to the FARC may well turn out to be a triumph of hope over experience. But given the long history of bloodshed, the FARC offer was one Mr. Santos could hardly refuse, even if it only proves that, short of a FARC surrender, there is not much a modern liberal democracy has to talk about with the drug-running Marxists.

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Japan's Zero-Nuclear Dream

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[Washington Post](#)

IT'S EASY to understand the Japanese dream of a nuclear-free future. During last year's meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex, tens of millions of residents on Japan's densely populated islands feared emergency evacuation and contamination of scarce land. Yet the government's new goal to phase out nuclear power over the next few decades would have serious costs, financial and to the climate.

Before the accident, Japan derived a third of its electricity from nuclear power. Now, most of the country's 50 nuclear reactors sit idle. The results have been power shortages and skyrocketing imports of oil and natural gas. Not only have these taken a toll on Japanese business, harmed the nation's quality of life and turned the country's trade surplus into a deficit, they portend ominously for Japan's carbon dioxide emissions. Nuclear power plants produce almost none.

Taking up an argument from anti-nuclear activists, the Japanese government claims that it will address these issues by investing heavily in renewable sources of electricity, such as solar, geothermal and wind power. But it admits that it has no details about the feasibility and cost of its goal to triple the amount of electricity the country gets from renewables, nor does it have a plan to limit the impact on emissions of burning lots more fossil fuels as renewables ramp up.

Fighting climate change is hard enough without wasting resources, and Japan's nuclear infrastructure and know-how can be valuable assets in that battle, as long as the country continues to retrofit its safety regime. A government report this year calculated that Japan might still be able to cut its carbon emissions by 25 percent of 1990 levels by 2030 without nuclear - though the government is now committing only to 20 percent. But that same report found that the country could cut those emissions by 33 percent if it got a fifth of its electricity from nuclear, and 39 percent if it derived a third of its load from nuclear. And then there is the importance of ensuring access to reliable, always-on power, of the sort nuclear used to provide the country.

The government has built some - though not enough - wiggle room into its zero-nuclear plan. It will restart reactors that its new nuclear watchdog certifies as safe; otherwise, it will seek to shut only those plants that are more than 40 years old. Even then, old reactors could obtain 20-year extensions to their service lives. The government also said that its plan could be revised, which could leave more room for building reactors in the future, particularly if its big bet on renewables doesn't work out as well as some environmentalists predict.

Some observers say that the government's new tack is merely political; the ruling Democratic Party of Japan is attempting to forestall large losses in elections to be held sometime in the next few months, so it is talking tough on nuclear. This suggests that the government might not move away from reactors with the energy its zero-nuclear rhetoric implies. If that's so, the Japanese public would have reason to feel manipulated - but it would also benefit from a more flexible approach to powering the world's third-largest economy.

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