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American killed, embassy stormed as anti-US violence mars 9/11 anniversary

By Julian Pecquet and Sheldon Alberts - 09/11/12 06:53 PM ET

An American was reportedly killed Tuesday in a brazen attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya amid an outbreak in Middle East violence that marred the anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks.

Security officials in Libya said one U.S. citizen died when armed militants angry over broadcast of an anti-Islam film set fire to the U.S. consulate, [AFP reported](#). The American killed in the attack was a staff member of the consulate, [Reuters reported](#), citing Libyan sources.

The siege of the consulate in Libya came as Egyptian protesters, in a separate incident, scaled the walls of the U.S. embassy in Cairo and tore and burned an American flag that was flying at half-mast for the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks. They replaced it with an Islamic banner, Reuters [reports](#).

The protests were apparently sparked by an anti-Islam video linked to Florida pastor Terry Jones, whose public burning of the Koran in 2010 led to deadly protests in Afghanistan. The film reportedly mocks the prophet Muhammad.

"We can confirm that our office in Benghazi, Libya, has been attacked by a group of militants. We are working with the Libyans now to secure the compound," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said in a statement. "We condemn in strongest terms this attack on our diplomatic mission."

The violent protests come as Egypt is negotiating a \$4.8 billion low-interest IMF loan and a \$1 billion debt relief package with the United States.

The State Department sought to play down Tuesday's incident in Egypt during a press briefing Tuesday.

"Obviously, one of the things about the new Egypt is that protest is possible," Nuland said. "Obviously we all want to see peaceful protest, which is not what happened outside the U.S. mission, so we're trying to restore calm now. But I think the bigger picture is one of the United States supporting Egypt's democratic transition and the Egyptian Government very much welcoming and working with us on the support that we have to offer."

The U.S. embassy in Cairo had tried to defuse tensions earlier in the day by putting out a statement Tuesday objecting to the film and denouncing "misguided individuals" who "abuse the universal right of free speech to hurt the religious beliefs of others," to no avail.

Jones and others were reportedly due to take part in an event on Tuesday called "International Judge Mohammad Day" in Florida, carried live on the Internet. The New York Times reported Jones had sent the newspaper an email on Tuesday announcing plans to screen the trailer from the movie.

Source:

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