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## White House FINALLY admits U.S. consulate attacks in Libya that killed ambassador were acts of terror (but Obama still blames anti-Islam film)

- President refused to confirm al Qaeda involvement in attack where Ambassador Chris Stevens and three others were killed
- White House spokesman said: 'It is self-evident that what happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack'
- Ambassador Stevens said he feared increasing threat of al Qaeda
- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said today there was 'no basis' for fears
- Raises yet more questions about why there was not security at consulate
- Comes amid claims that ringleader behind attack was former Guantanamo inmate handed over to Libya by America

By [Michael Zennie](#), [Lydia Warren](#) and [Louise Boyle](#)

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The White House admitted today it was 'self-evident' that the attack on the U.S. consulate in Libya was a terrorist act - but the President himself refused to use this phrase or confirm al-Qaeda involvement.

U.S. ambassador Chris Stevens and three others were killed in the deadly assault on the Benghazi compound on the 11th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

President Obama said on Thursday that extremists used an anti-Islam video as an excuse to assault U.S. interests overseas, including the attack on the consulate.

Speaking at a candidate forum on the Spanish-language network Univision, Obama said: 'What we do know is that the natural protests that arose because of the outrage over the video were used as an excuse by extremists to see if they can also directly harm U.S. interests.'

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**Quizzed: Obama said on Thursday during a town hall that extremists used the anti-Islam video to assault U.S. interests overseas including the attack on the consulate in Libya**



**'Not at risk': Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said today that there was no information ambassador to Libya Chris Steven (right) was on an al Qaeda hit list**

Asked if that meant al-Qaeda, Obama said: 'We don't know yet.'

He added: 'We will focus narrowly and forcefully on groups like al Qaeda, the ones that carried out the 9/11 attacks. Those forces have not gone away.'

Republicans have accused the Obama administration of misreading the assault as the outgrowth of widespread demonstrations in the Middle East over the video.

They insisted it was a terrorist attack, a term White House spokesman Jay Carney used on Thursday. Obama did not use the phrase.

Earlier in the week, senior State department officials had refused to call the raid an act of terrorism.

However nine days after the attacks, Carney said: 'It is, I think, self evident that what happened in Benghazi was a terrorist attack.

'Our embassy was attacked violently and the result was four deaths of American officials. That is self evident.'



Under the spotlight: Obama was questioned by Univision news anchors Jorge Ramos, left and Maria Elena Salinas, center, at the University of Miami in Florida



'Self-evident': White House spokesman Jay Carney said today the attacks on the U.S. consulate in Libya were acts of terror

Carney's admission came after director of the U.S. National Counter-terrorism Center, Matthew Olsen, told the Senate on Wednesday that the attack was planned and not merely the result of protesters demonstrating against an anti-Islamic film.

'I would say yes, they were killed in the course of a terrorist attack on our embassy,' Olsen said at a Senate Homeland Security Committee hearing.

The new revelations were after Hillary Clinton said today there was 'no information' that the U.S. Ambassador to Libya was on an al-Qaeda hit list despite his alleged fears of an attack.

Chris Stevens had worried about what he called the 'never-ending' security threats in the Libyan city and was concerned about the increasing threats of Islamic extremism and al-Qaeda, [CNN](#) reported.

However the Secretary of State said she had 'no reason to believe that there's any basis for that', referring to a report where a source close to Stevens relayed his concerns.

The revelations raise yet more questions about why the ambassador and the three other U.S. citizens killed in the attack were at the consulate with scant security.

Clinton faced questions from members of the House and Senate about the September 11 attack on the consulate in Benghazi in a series of closed-door classified briefings on Capitol Hill.



**Concerns:** Chris Stevens, pictured speaking to Council member for Misrata Dr. Suleiman Fortia, said he was on an al Qaeda hit list before he was killed in an attack on the Benghazi consulate



**Leader:** Sufyan Ben Qumu, who has known extremist ties, became one of the top commanders of rebel forces in Benghazi

Clinton also announced that, in line with federal law, she will appoint an independent panel to look at circumstances of the attack in Benghazi that killed Ambassador Stevens and three other employees.

The so-called Accountability Review Board will be chaired by retired diplomat Thomas Pickering, she said.

Democrats and Republicans emerging from the briefings provided some details about what the administration is still piecing together - who was responsible, how much of it was planned and what was the security.

Joining Clinton at the briefings were Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter.

Rep. Adam Smith of Washington state, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, said it was 'clearly a terrorist attack,' but mortars weren't used until six, seven hours into the fight.

Smith added: 'So it seemed like an armed gang that seized an opportunity.'

Both Smith and Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersburger of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said there was no evidence to suggest that the local Libyans at the consulate colluded with the attackers.

Some reports have suggested that Sufyan bin Qumu, a former detainee at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, who was transferred to Libya in 2007, was involved. Lawmakers asked about Qumu at the briefing.

'But not directly related to the attack, but as someone who's in that region,' Smith said.

'They're attempting to establish whether or not he was connected to the people who made the attack. He's certainly a person of interest.'

Investigators have found no evidence or intelligence to suggest Qumu was at the conflict, leading it or organizing it, according to a U.S. official.



**Attack: The US embassy in Benghazi was raided on the 11th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks**



**Deadly: Four people died, including US Ambassador Christopher Stevens, during an assault on the US Consulate in Benghazi, Libya**

The former al-Qaeda terrorist released from Guantanamo Bay had been named as the apparent leader of the attack on the U.S. consulate.

Sufyan Ben Qumu, who was reportedly once Osama bin Laden's driver, was let out of the U.S. military detention center in Cuba in 2007 and turned over to the government of Muammar Gaddafi on the condition he be kept behind bars.

The US military characterized him as a 'medium to high' risk to national security while he was in U.S. custody and he refused to cooperate with authorities and explain his past associations with Islamic extremists.

Qumu, 53, is a Libyan army veteran who was jailed by Qaddafi and later escaped and moved to Sudan, where he worked for one of Osama bin Laden's holding companies.

According to some reports, he was bin Laden's driver during his time at the company. However, he denies this.

He also fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan with the Mujaheddin. Later he took up arms against the Northern Alliance and fought alongside the Taliban.

Later, he moved to Pakistan and slipped across the border into Afghanistan, where he began working at a charity that was a front for al-Qaeda in the summer of 2001.

He was arrested in Pakistan by local authorities shortly after the US invasion of Afghanistan. He was taken to the Guantanamo Bay detention center and held there for six years.



**Tragic: John Christopher Stevens is the first US Ambassador to be killed by violence overseas since 1979. He apparently died of smoke inhalation after the attack on the consulate in Benghazi**



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**Victims: Sean Smith (left), 34, was a foreign service computer expert who had previously been posted to Baghdad. Glen Doherty, 42, was a former US Navy SEAL who was working as a private security contractor**

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Despite his lengthy association with extremists, including the 9/11 mastermind and al-Qaeda leader himself, the military recommended in a 2005 report sending him back to his home country of Libya.

In 2007, Qumu was released from Gitmo and turned over to Gaddafi on the condition that he be kept in prison.

But, in 2010 Gaddafi freed him from the notorious Abu Salim prison in Tripoli, along with 37 other prisoners, to celebrate the dictator's 41st year in power.

During the uprising, Qumu emerged as a leader of the rebels.

He was a tank driver during his time in the Libyan army, though he had been arrested several times on drug and alcohol offenses.

In addition to Mr Stevens, who friends said devoted his life to promoting peace and cultural understanding, three other Americans were killed when a mob attacked and burned the consulate in former rebel stronghold city.



**Wrecked:** The consulate was badly damaged in the attack that forced US personnel to flee



**Extremists:** The Libyan government blamed the attack on Islamic extremists angry over the release of a trailer for an American anti-Islam movie

Sean Smith, a foreign service officer, was a 34-year-old father of two. Glen Doherty, 42, was a former US Navy SEAL who was working at the consulate as a private security contractor.

The attack on the consulate came after the release of a trailer for the controversial movie 'The Innocence of Muslims,' which paints a portrait of Islam that many in the Muslim world find deeply offensive.

Senate Republicans expressed frustration with the information provided at the sessions and disputed the administration's assessment.

'There's increasing amount of evidence that this was a coordinated attack by terrorists,' said Senator Marco Rubio, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee.

'The movie wasn't the catalyst for this, the catalyst was radical Islamic extremists that wanted to attack the United States and saw an opportunity to do it in Benghazi.'

One of the harshest critics of the administration, Senator John McCain, scoffed at the administration's argument that the video set off the assault.

'I'm stunned that they thought this was some kind of spontaneous demonstration,' McCain told reporters.





**Destruction: The White House has now named the attack an act of terrorism**



**Protests: Unrest remains high in Libya after the release of 'The Innocence of Muslims'**

**VIDEO: Last video of Chris Stevens being dragged from the embassy**

**VIDEO: Gunmen attack U.S. consulate in Benghazi September 11th**

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the headline and premise are insane. We needed to gather actual facts and evidence before speaking. There were some indications, because a second group arrived and was well armed with heavy weapons... but they could have been Quadaffi diehards... or some other group. There was no need for a rush to judgement.. the 13 people are still dead.

- [Kevin](#) , NYC, 21/9/2012 17:00

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Greg, Chicago- You'll "take Obama?" Oh please, please, please take him!!! We don't want him. I'll pay you to take him, just get him out of the White House!!!

- [Thinkforyourself](#) , Rockingham, 21/9/2012 16:34

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My 10 year old son could have told them this.

- [Tifany](#) , Alabama, United States, 21/9/2012 16:29

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The Obama administration sits down to pee.

- [derf](#) , Pendergrass GA USA, United States, 21/9/2012 16:04

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Jay Carney the "carney" man.... Obama who is an "obamanation" in the lies he has perpetrated hoping as he says them enough people will believe, and Hilary the hilarious in all she thinks and says and does these days... WAKE UP vote this REGIME (doesn't that say enough!!) out!! Save our beloved U.S.A.

- [Joe Begadadochi](#) , Lavallette, 21/9/2012 15:36

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Thin resume, thin skin, thin capabilities. Ok, he's a novice, but not being able to tell the truth and accept blame are unforgivable!!!! Hillary tried to ban uniforms from the WH back in her day, how did that work Hill? She arranged security without bullets!! Obama hasn't a clue. He would prefer you stopped thinking, join his cult and give him more Nobel prizes for nothing...

- [Sledge](#) , San Diego, 21/9/2012 07:40

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Ok. I see we're attempting to politicize the death of an ambassador, and in the process blame the president. Well, if we're going to blame Obama for this incident (Yes, he's a Democrat), then it's fair to link 9/11 to Bush Jr. (Yes, the WORST attack since Pearl

Harbor- All thanks to a republican.) I'll take Obama.

- [Greg](#) , Chicago, 21/9/2012 07:26

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Your comments:I imagine all the Libyan innocents killed and maimed and left homeless by NATO fire because Saddam (sic) wanted to change the payments for oil from the American dollar back to gold felt they were being terrorised too. - Les, Thailand --- Saddam was hanged in 2006 and has nothing to do with this. You IDIOT! - A Guy in the World , Murica, United States, 21/9/2012 06:10 Yes of course, And those that were maimed and had family members killed by NATO actions of course bear no resentment. You probably beleive Saddam was killed because 'he was a bad man.' No, the CIA orchestrated the riots leading to civil war and NATO finished the job. It was about oil money.

- [Les](#) , Thailand, 21/9/2012 07:20

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As America and indeed most western nations move to the left on the political spectrum. The assertive religion of Islam and the nations it controls rub their hands with glee. America calls itself the leader of the free world, well wake up you are leading us to scenario where we will not be able to recover from.

- [Disillusioned](#) , London, 21/9/2012 07:16

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It seems the entire administration has taken veracity lessons from "Baghdad Bob"...

- [Ginnie](#) , Houston, 21/9/2012 06:33

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