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Blowback: Paris Killings Likely Revenge for French Military Interventionism

By Jason Ditz

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The whole world stood aghast as a pair of gunmen, angered by free speech itself, stormed into a satirical magazine, mowing down cartoonists and writers who they saw as “insulting Islam.” 12 were killed, simply because of caricatures.

Lots of people buy that story, just like a lot of people bought the idea that 9/11 was done because “they hate us for our freedom.” In both cases, the underlying context isn’t examined too carefully.

The truth of the matter is, France has gotten extremely aggressive militarily in recent years, engaging in multiple military interventions across Africa and the Middle East, The same week of the attack, French officials were beating the war drums on Libya.

Blowback is a far more reasonable explanation for the sudden and violent attack in Paris. Charlie Hebdo may have been the convenient target, but many analysts agree that it was French foreign policy that was the real inciter.

The deaths of the cartoonists has sparked a beautiful narrative around the inviolability of free speech, and the price that must be paid to ensure freedom to future generations.

Yet ultimately, the attacks on “offensive” cartoonists are less about the cartoonists themselves than they are about the anger and desperation fueled by military intervention abroad. The lesson will be lost on many, of course, as the most convenient explanation is that the worst cases of terrorism are happening for their own sake.