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Why was the U.S. ambassador killed in Libya?

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An American film ridiculing Islam's Prophet Muhammad recently resulted in an anti-American protest outside the U.S. consulate in Libya's eastern city of Benghazi, which raised the curtain on a wave of anti-American protests sweeping across the Middle East and even the entire world. The protests spread to more than 20 countries in just a few days, including Australia and certain European countries, and turned violent in certain regions.

Hard to find truth

A trailer of the anti-Islam film, Innocence of Muslims, was uploaded to YouTube as early as July, but did not receive much attention. A version dubbed into Arabic was posted on the same YouTube channel in early September and spread by Egyptian American blogger Morris Sadek. The Arabic version was copied and viewed tens of thousands of times more. Afterward, Sadek planned screenings of the film, and his ally announced plans to screen the trailer for the film on the night of Sept. 11 in an e-mail sent to the New York Times. The trailer sparked protests and violence around the Muslim world.

It remains unclear why Sadek made efforts to promote the film, and the cause of the death of J. Christopher Stevens, the U.S. ambassador to Libya, also remains unknown. A senior U.S. official said that the ambassador was missing almost immediately after the start of an intense attack, and his body was not located until Wednesday dawn, when he was found dead at a Benghazi hospital.

Who killed the U.S. ambassador?

The attack on the U.S. consulate is not accidental given the recent wave of anti-American protests. The protests in Libya and Egypt seemed to be just a fuse, and the real culprits in the attack have not been identified yet.

Analysts noted that no matter who killed the U.S. ambassador, the United States has only itself to blame. On the one hand, self-righteous Americans have long held deep-rooted prejudices against the Muslim world. On the other hand, the U.S. policy in the Middle East runs counter to local residents' interests, and its partiality toward Israel made itself unpopular among the Arabs.

Look at yourself before judging others

The Libyan opposition treated U.S. diplomats as distinguished guests in its stronghold of Benghazi last year, but a global wave of anti-American protests started in this city this year. The U.S. government must have not expected this to happen. Analysts attributed it to the United States' lack of preparation to deal with radical Islamic forces after orchestrating a regime change in Libya.

The U.S. government has ordered the deletion of related videos, and strengthened security at its diplomatic posts around the world in order to prevent more casualties and further deterioration of the situation. It has also sent about 50 Marines to Libya to increase security at the U.S. consulate in Benghazi. On Sept. 15, the U.S. State Department ordered the evacuation of all family members and non-emergency personnel from embassies in Sudan and Tunisia due to security concerns over rising anti-American violence.

Libyan officials confirmed that local militias using anti-aircraft guns attacked several U.S. drones flying over Benghazi. Certain analysts noted that the United States could be making preparations for arresting or killing the culprits behind the murder of Stevens.

However, the Obama administration is unlikely to immediately launch a major counter-terrorism operation because the truth remains unknown and the presidential election is right around the corner. The attack occurred on the 11th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, when Americans were filled with grief for their dead compatriots. However, how much grief can they feel for the people who died or are still suffering from U.S.-launched wars?