Washington had credible information of attack on US Consulate in Benghazi. No action was taken

Al-Qaeda and Possibly Infiltrators in Libyan Forces at Center of US Consulate Attack

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The assault on the US consulate building in Libya Tuesday night was a planned attack by al-Qaeda militants that may have involved infiltrators within Libya's new security forces.

According to senior diplomatic sources, the US State Department had credible information 48 hours before the attack that American diplomatic buildings may be targeted, but no warnings were given for diplomats to go on high alert or to otherwise respond accordingly.

While the attack was initially thought to be solely in response to an insulting anti-Muslim film produced in the US, it included heavy weapons and rocket-propelled grenades and turned out to be a two-pronged attack too well coordinated to be a spontaneous protest.

Wanis el-Sharef, eastern Libya's deputy interior minister, told the Associated Press the attacks were suspected to have been timed to mark the 9/11 anniversary and the recent killing of an al-Qada commander in Pakistan. The militants used civilian anger about the anti-Muslim film as cover for their action.

After the initial attack, Americans were taken out of the consulate building to hide out in a safe house, but that the safe house was then attacked in an equally coordinated attack. Sharef said infiltrators within the Libyan government forces may have tipped off militants to the safe house location.

The incident is turning out to be a serious and continuing security breach for the US government, according to *The Independent*: "Some of the missing papers from the consulate are said to list names of Libyans who are working with Americans, putting them potentially at risk from extremist groups, while some of the other documents are said to relate to oil contracts."

The US government led a NATO mission in Libya last year to unseat Muammar Gadhafi. From the beginning there were concerns that the rebel militias being aided in the war had extensive links to al-Qaeda. The new US-backed government has not been able to control the country since nominally coming to power, as rebel militias continue to hold power in many areas throughout the country and refuse to disarm. Militants linked with al-Qaeda remain in Libya, with several encampments in the east.

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