

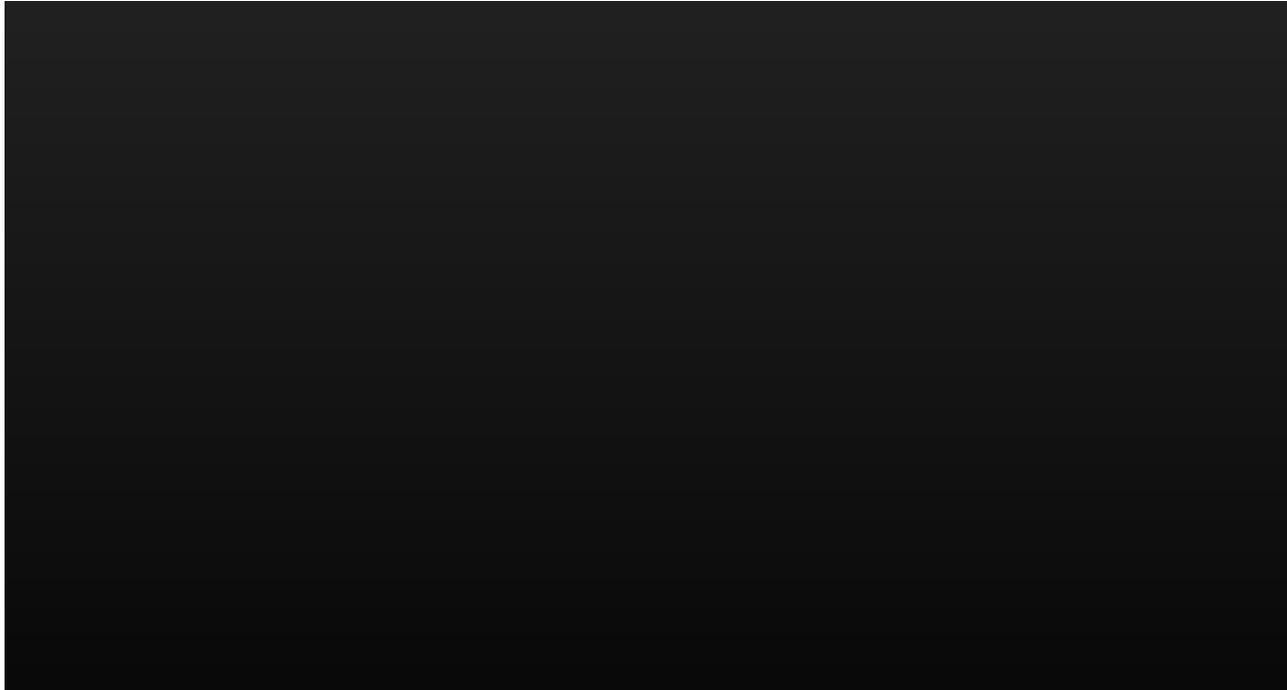
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Amb. Susan Rice, Rep. Mike Rogers discuss violence against Americans in the Middle East

Written by Chris Wallace / Published September 16, 2012 / Fox News Sunday

Special Guests: Amb. Susan Rice, Rep. Mike Rogers



Did US policy or anti-Muslim film spark Mideast violence?

September 16, 2012 - 11:14 -

Amb. Susan Rice responds

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CHRIS WALLACE, HOST: I'm Chris Wallace.

Violence against Americans sweeps the Middle East.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

WALLACE: We'll have the latest from the region and discuss what the Obama administration will do next with the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice.

Then, big questions on Capitol Hill. Who is behind the attack that killed the U.S. ambassador to Libya? And should we cut off foreign protect our diplomats?

We'll ask the head of the House Intelligence Committee, Chairman Mike Rogers.

Plus, tough talk from both candidates on the Middle East. We'll ask our Sunday panel if foreign policy will finally become an issue in this campaign.

And our Power Players of the Week, using their Washington clout to fight a devastating disease.

All right now on "Fox News Sunday."

(END VIDEOTAPE)

WALLACE: And hello again from Fox News in Washington.

We'll talk with Ambassador Rice and Chairman Rogers in a moment. But, first, here is the latest on the situation overseas. Protesters have attacked U.S. targets in more than 20 nations. Citing concerns over security, the State Department ordered all nonessential U.S. government personnel to leave Sudan and Tunisia. And in Benghazi, Libya, there are reports of more arrests in the attack that killed four Americans, including Ambassador Chris Stevens.

For more on the continuing unrest, let's bring in correspondent Leland Vittert, who is in Cairo, Egypt -- Leland.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

LELAND VITBERT, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: In cities across the Middle East, there is now a tense calm that has taken over here in Cairo. Hundreds if not thousands of riot police ready on standby in case violence breaks out, once again. For four days, it was a pitched fight between protesters on the street throwing Molotov cocktails and hurling rocks and then police firing back with rubber bullets and tear gas.

The protesters carrying posters of Usama bin Laden and chanting, "Obama, Obama, we are all Usama."

In Tunis, Tunisia, U.S. citizens have been advised to evacuate the country and/or not travel to Tunisia after violence swept there that killed four people when protesters stormed the U.S. embassy.

The government of Sudan, we're hearing, has denied entry to a Marine Special Operations team that was deemed sent to secure the U.S. embassy after a local sheikh called for mass protests in that country which

resulted in thousands storming the embassy and security forces opening fire to try and push back the protesters.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has issued a communique urging more attacks. And here in Cairo, local media reports, there was a credible threat against the U.S. embassy here. Security is at an unprecedented level, with 15-foot tall concrete barriers erected on every one of the entranceways down to the U.S. embassy compound. We took a walk around earlier and outside the barricades, the protesters made their message clear, spray-painted in English "USA go to hell."

Chris, back to you.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

WALLACE: Leland Vittert reporting from Cairo -- Leland, thanks for that.

Joining us now our ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice. Ambassador, welcome back to "Fox News Sunday."

AMB. SUSAN RICE, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS: Thank you.

WALLACE: This week, there have been anti-American protests in two dozen countries across the Islamic world. The White House says it has nothing to do with the president's policies.

Let's watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JAY CARNEY, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY: This is not a case of protests directed at the United States writ large or at U.S. policy. This is in response to a video that is offensive.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WALLACE: You don't really believe that?

RICE: Chris, absolutely I believe that. In fact, it is the case. We had the evolution of the Arab spring over the last many months. But what sparked the recent violence was the airing on the Internet of a very hateful very offensive video that has offended many people around the world.

Now, our strong view is that there is no excuse for violence. It is absolutely reprehensible and never justified. But, in fact, there have been those in various parts of the world who have reacted with violence. Their governments have increasingly and effectively responded and protected our facilities and condemned the violence and this outrageous response to what is an offensive video. But there is no question that what we have seen in the past, with things like satanic verses, with the cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad, there have been -- such things that have sparked outrage and anger and this has been the proximate cause of what we've seen.

WALLACE: Now, it may have sparked it but you critics say that the outpouring of outrage against the U.S. has everything to do with the U.S. policies, that we are disengaging from that part of the world, that we pulled out of Iraq, we are pulling out of Afghanistan, that Iran is continuing on with its nuclear program. And they say, our critics, that our allies no longer trust us, and our enemies no longer fear us.

RICE: Well, Chris, that's just false. And let's be plain -- our partners and allies have responded effectively and promptly when we have asked them to protect our facilities and our people.

WALLACE: Well, let's -- it took three days in Cairo.

RICE: Well -- and what happened initially in Cairo was not sufficiently robust when President Obama picked up the phone and spoke to the President Morsi, right away things changed. And that's an evidence of our

influence and our impact.

And what happened was that the authorities in Egypt have been very robust in protecting our facilities, not just in Cairo, but elsewhere in the country. President Morsi has issued repeated condemnations of the violent response and called for calm. And we have seen the same thing in Yemen, in Libya, in Tunisia and many other parts of the world.

WALLACE: Why are we asking all nongovernmental personnel to leave Sudan and Tunisia?

RICE: Well, first of all, we're not asking all non-governmental personnel.

WALLACE: All non-essential governmental personnel.

RICE: What we have done on a selective basis, where we assess that the security conditions necessitate is to temporarily have family members and non-essential personnel depart the country. That's something we do all over the world when security circumstances warrant. It's short-term, it's temporary and it's prudent.

And we do it, Chris, because we obviously prioritize. The president has been very clear his number one priority is the protection of American personnel and facilities.

WALLACE: So do you think we're turning the corner here?

RICE: Well, Chris, I think, first of all, we have seen in the past outrage and unfortunately violent outrage which is condemnable and never justified. It may, indeed, occur in other circumstances. There is no predicting exactly what the trajectory of this is. Obviously, the last couple of days have been some what better. But we are vigilant and we are of the view that is not an expression of hospitality in the broadest sense towards the United States or U.S. policy. It's approximately a reaction to this video and it's a hateful video that had nothing to do with the United States and which we find disgusting and reprehensible.

WALLACE: You talk about our influence and impact in the region. Our closest ally in the region, Israel, clearly doesn't feel that we are supporting them when it comes to confronting Iran. In fact, this past week, Prime Minister Netanyahu blasted the U.S. for its failure to set the same red lines as he has in terms of stopping Iran's nuclear program.

Let's watch what the prime minister said.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER: The world tells Israel, wait, there is still time. And I say, wait for what? Wait until when?

Those in the international community who refuse to put red lines before Iran don't have a moral right to place a red line in Jerusalem.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WALLACE: And when Netanyahu requested a meeting the president, said he was too busy to meet with him.

RICE: Let me address --

WALLACE: Let me ask a question, if I may.

RICE: I thought you had. I'm sorry.

WALLACE: Well, no, I haven't. They'll be a question mark at the end.

Is that how we treat our best friend in the region?

RICE: Well, let me answer that question in three parts. First of all, the overall relationship with Israel. As Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Barak have repeatedly said, the intelligence and security relationship between the United States and Israel at present is unprecedented. It has never been stronger. That's - those are their words.

So, that's the overall nature of our relationship, very strong -- stronger than ever.

Secondly, with respect to Iran. The United States, President Obama has been absolutely crystal clear that the United States will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon and we will do what it takes to prevent that from happening. All options remain on the table. The president has been very clear about that and that includes the military option. This is not a policy of containment, Chris. As the president has repeatedly said, it's a policy to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. That is the bottom line or as the prime minister prefers to call it, a red line. That's the bottom line.

Now, we have also said and I think we are in constant communication with Israeli security and intelligence and policy officials that we still think that there is team through economic pressure which is unprecedented as well. Iran's economy is now shrinking by 1 percent a year. Its oil production is down 40 percent. Its currency has plummeted 40 percent just in the last several months as sanctions have gone into fullest effect.

We think there is still time and space for that pressure to yield a result. The bottom line, Chris, is the only way to permanently end Iran's nuclear program is if it decides to give that program up.

RICE: Now, the most solemn decision that a president can ever take is a decision to go to war. And President Obama's view is we will do what it takes it. But before we resort to the use of force, let us be sure we have exhausted other means including sanctions, pressure and diplomacy to ensure that Iran fully and finally gives up its nuclear weapons.

WALLACE: Let's talk in the time we have left about the --

RICE: You asked about the visit --

WALLACE: We have limited time. I'm happy -- if you want to go along, I'm happy to as well.

RICE: I don't want to leave that hanging. That was the third point I wanted to address.

As you know, the president is coming up to the General Assembly in New York at the United Nations. He'll be there in the beginning of the week, Monday and Tuesday. Prime Minister Netanyahu is coming toward the end of the week. Their schedules don't match. There is no opportunity for them to meet in the U.S.

WALLACE: The prime minister would be willing I'm sure to go. And in fact there are suggestions from the Israelis to go to Washington.

RICE: Well, the prime minister hasn't asked for a meeting in Washington, Chris.

(CROSSTALK)

WALLACE: If you watched what he just said, he said that countries that don't set red lines don't have the moral authority to put red lines on Israel. That doesn't sound like a happy ally, Ambassador.

RICE: Well, first of all, we are close partners and friends and always will be. That is an enduring aspect of the U.S.-Israeli relationship.

WALLACE: Why did the president call Prime Minister Netanyahu in the middle of the night and talk for an

hour?

RICE: Precisely because they are friends, and when friends need to say something to each other, they pick up the phone and talk and they talked for an hour. It was a good conversation and it's in the nature of our relationship that these two partners speak to one another regularly.

We have no daylight between us on the issue of preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. That is our clear bottom line and the president could not be any plainer about it.

WALLACE: Let's talk about the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi this week that killed four Americans, including Ambassador Chris Stevens.

The top Libyan official says that the attack on Tuesday was, quote, his words "preplanned". Al Qaeda says the operation was revenge for our killing a top Al Qaeda leader.

What do we know?

RICE: Well, first of all, Chris, we are obviously investigating this very closely. The FBI has a lead in this investigation. The information, the best information and the best assessment we have today is that in fact this was not a preplanned, premeditated attack. That what happened initially was that it was a spontaneous reaction to what had just transpired in Cairo as a consequence of the video. People gathered outside the embassy and then it grew very violent and those with extremist ties joined the fray and came with heavy weapons, which unfortunately are quite common in post-revolutionary Libya and that then spun out of control.

But we don't see at this point signs this was a coordinated plan, premeditated attack. Obviously, we will wait for the results of the investigation and we don't want to jump to conclusions before then. But I do think it's important for the American people to know our best current assessment.

WALLACE: All right. And the last question, terror cells in Benghazi had carried out five attacks since April, including one at the same consulate, a bombing at the same consulate in June. Should U.S. security have been tighter at that consulate given the history of terror activity in Benghazi?

RICE: Well, we obviously did have a strong security presence. And, unfortunately, two of the four Americans who died in Benghazi were there to provide security. But it wasn't sufficient in the circumstances to prevent the overrun of the consulate. This is among the things that will be looked at as the investigation unfolds and it's also why --

WALLACE: Is there any feeling that it should have been stronger beforehand?

RICE: It's also why we increased our presence, our security presence in Tripoli in the aftermath of this, as well as in other parts of the world. I can't judge that, Chris. I'm -- we have to see what the assessment reveals.

But, obviously, there was a significant security presence defending our consulate and our other facility in Benghazi and that did not prove sufficient to the moment.

WALLACE: Ambassador Rice, we thank you so much for coming in today and discussing the fast-moving developments in that part of the world. Thanks so much.

RICE: Thank you for having me.

WALLACE: Up next, the head of the House Intelligence Committee, Mike Rogers, with the latest on who was behind that deadly attack on our diplomats.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

WALLACE: There are still more questions than answers about the attack in Libya Tuesday that killed U.S. ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

For more on where the investigation stands, we are joined which the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Congressman Mike Rogers, who is in his home state of Michigan.

Well, Congressman, you just heard Ambassador Rice say that her latest indications are that the attack on the consulate in Benghazi was a spontaneous demonstration about that video control that spun out of control. Do you agree with the ambassador?

REP. MIKE ROGERS, CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE: I think it's just too early to make that conclusion. There are -- there's analysts in Department of Defense and CIA. There's operatives in both places.

As an FBI agent, I get to look at all of that. I come to a different conclusion. They are only moderately confident it was a spontaneous event because there's huge gaps in what we know.

The way that the attack took place, I have serious questions. It seemed to be a military style coordinated. They had indirect fire, coordinated with direct fire, rocket attacks. They were able to launch two different separate attacks on locations there near the consulate and they repelled a fairly significant Libyan force that came to rescue the embassy.

And then it was on 9/11 and there is other information, classified information, that we have that just makes you stop for a minute and pause.

And as the first thing you learn as a young FBI agent in this, there are coincidences but they're not likely, and there are a lot of coincidences about this event.

Do I believe that people did show than had weapons and joined the effort? Probably I do, but I think to me, when you look at all of the information across both departments, it sure -- I'm just suspect that they could come to that conclusion so assuredly that it was a spontaneous effort given the coordination of it.

WALLACE: There has been talk about an extremist group in Benghazi, Ansar al-Sharia. There has been talk that they were in touch with another group, Al Qaeda in North Africa.

What can you tell us about that?

ROGERS: You know, for months, Al Qaeda in the Maghreb, and that's across northern Africa, which joined in about 2007 I think it was or 2008, they joined Al Qaeda. So they had their own groups across northern Africa.

What they have been looking -- they have been looking because Al Qaeda core, Zawahiri and others, have told them that you want -- you need to start attacking Western targets. So they have been looking for opportunities.

We know, there was an IED at this facility just months ago. So, we know that there is some interest by al Qaeda, strong interest I should say to attack Western targets. We know that Al Qaeda cells in Tunisia have been developing; in Libya have been developing.

We can't say for certain it was an Al Qaeda event. It just has all of the hall marks, Chris, of an Al Qaeda-style event.

WALLACE: Given and you just mentioned the fact there had been an IED attack at this consulate. There have been, as I mentioned to Ambassador Rice, been five terror attacks on the ground against Western interests in Benghazi.

I understand that hindsight is 20/20. But were we as prepared as we should have been given the fact that, yes,

there was a history of violence in the region and, yes, it was the 11th anniversary of 9/11 and, yes, the ambassador was at this not very fortified installation in Benghazi.

Should there have been more security there?

ROGERS: Yes, that one is going to be hard to assess. I think we need to walk to that conclusion and not run. One of the things we do ask diplomats in places like Libya to do, and remember, they're volunteers, they're in dangerous neighborhoods. It's a bit of an expeditionary exercise.

We didn't have an embassy there but it was important to have U.S. influence there for hopefully a better outcome that leads to more peaceful events in the future. So, he gave his life in that effort and it was expeditionary. So, we have to look at was the security accurate for what we knew in accordance with what the mission was for the ambassador in Benghazi at that time. I don't think any one today can say yes or no.

I think it's going to take -- and I know the FBI is on the ground. They'll have a great forensic when they are done a great forensic picture for us and then we can make that determination and we're also -- through the committee and through the intelligence services -- scrubbing everything we knew up to that point.

Was there a smoking gun that was missed? I don't think we know that answer either. I have not seen anything that indicates that. But we just don't know.

So, I think all of those pieces have to be put together before we come to the conclusion they didn't have the right security posture there in Benghazi.

WALLACE: Let's talk about the broader picture and wave of anti- American violence across Islamic world this week. You just heard Ambassador Rice say that this has nothing to do with U.S. policy in the Middle East. It is all about that video that insults the Prophet Muhammad.

Congressman, do you believe that?

ROGERS: I don't. I think this is a convenient effort by all of the groups who have other ulterior motives. If you remember even -- I know the ambassador mentioned the Prophet Muhammad cartoons. Well, there were months that went by before violence was incited. They did that through their own information operations. They being Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

So, we know that Al Qaeda is clearly trying to use this to incite violence. So, this is a mechanism to do what they have been trying to do all along. And what we are finding, too, in some of the demonstrators in Egypt is finding that a lot of the folks showing up hadn't even seen the video and this is some of that youth group that really started the change in Egypt and now the day the election happened felt immediately disenfranchised.

You have economic problems, religious problems, cultural differences, tribal differences in Libya -- all of those things are simmering and we have had at least what appears to the folks in the Middle East -- and they can say what they want, I travel there frequently -- the Middle East believes, the countries in the Middle East, believe that there is a disengagement policy by the United States and that lack of leadership there or at least clarity on what our position is, is causing problems.

If we all decide to rally around the video as the problem we going to make a serious mistake and we are going to make I think diplomatic mistakes as we move forward if we think that is the only reason people are showing up at our embassy and trying to conduct acts of violence.

WALLACE: Well, you're not only the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. You are also a congressman. Let me ask you a political question, not an intelligence question.

Do you think the administration is putting it all on the video because that allows them to duck questions about their policies?

ROGERS: Well, I think we have not had a robust debate in the campaign, in the presidential campaign, about foreign policy. It has been on the back-burner. I mean, the president doesn't talk a lot about it. He hasn't given any speeches really of significance since the 2009 Cairo speech. I do think that, you know, policies overseas have consequences. As a matter of fact, I had a meeting with a senior Middle East intelligence official awhile ago and asked him if I could make you king for a day, what would you ask of the United States. And he stopped for a minute, Chris and he said, I'd like to know -- I would tell you to tell us, what is your Middle East policy? There is no U.S. leadership.

That's a pretty powerful thing to hear when you have all this chaos breaking out now and this was several months ago. But it just shows that those policies do have some consequence.

Now, it's a combination of all of the things I just talked about. It is a very, very difficult problem to solve, but you can't solve it by just trying to step back and letting the cauldron simmer on its own. We have to be a part of it, and it doesn't mean militarily.

It doesn't mean investing billions and billions and billions of dollars. It's a combination of showing strength and showing up. We have to be there. If Israel is --

WALLACE: Let me just interrupt for a second because I want to get to this point.

ROGERS: Yes?

WALLACE: Obviously, relationships were going to be much more complicated after the Arab spring, democracies replaced dictatorships. Islamic groups were allowed to protest in the streets where before they had been crushed. Fairly, given this changing situation, could the administration, the president, have done more to aggressively advance our interests in this changing Middle East?

ROGERS: I'm not going to say it's not hard. I think these are hard problems. But I do think that it's important that with U.S. leadership, you don't allow these governments to fan the flames of anti-Americanism for their own domestic consumption and do the wink, wink, nudge, nudge which exchange public statements about how we all don't like it. That is not a good policy and is not going to solve the problem.

You need very direct conversations. You need public conversations and I think from the president as well and I hope he does start to engage in a public way in foreign policy that helps set the record straight about the United States position.

And again, saying that we have great relationships. Saying everything is wonderful. Saying it's just this one video causing all of this problem, I mean, obviously, the bad guys are going to use this as a reason to do what they have already been doing.

But we need more than that. And that's where I hope -- maybe there's a silver line in this, Chris and we can turn this around.

This shouldn't be about the election. It can't be about the election. It has to be about standing up for our national security issues because it's going to impact us no matter who wins in November and it has -- as we can see -- very serious consequences if we don't get it right.

WALLACE: Congressman, should the U.S. -- and this is a decision you're going to have to make as a member of Congress -- should the U.S. either cut off aid to countries like Egypt and Libya or at least delay it, conditioned it, on the idea that that you have to show that you are willing to protect U.S. interests, whether it's literally protecting our embassies and diplomats or protecting U.S. -- or advancing U.S. policies?

ROGERS: Well, the first thing is they are obligated to protect our embassy. I wouldn't make that a condition of anything. They need to do that today, without excuse and without delay.

On top of that, I think we can condition aid. You know, I always said, if we just completely pull out of Egypt, is America better off or worse off when it comes to being able to influence a better outcome for peace?

I think it's probably better that we have some influence in Egypt that we can have conversations about, hey, you don't want to provoke Israel, you don't want to continue on with this anti-Americanism. But it has to be conditioned. We shouldn't just give the money and hope for the best. That's not going to work.

I think that if we condition the spending and understand it's OK to ask for something that is in our best interest. We shouldn't apologize for that. We shouldn't say that's offensive to anyone. It's our money. It's taxpayer money and we ought to say here is what we really want to have happen.

And that good influence of the United States, really we prefer commerce over conflict, and if we can continue to promote that around the world, the world is going to be a better place. We have to be there for that to happen.

So, I wouldn't run away from the money right away and say, we're going to punish you immediately, but we are going to condition it. And, by the way, if you don't do what you ask us to do, then we're going to take the money away. It's in our best interest to do it.

WALLACE: Congressman Rogers, we want to thank you so much for bringing us up to date on the investigation of that deadly attack in Libya and the whole rest of the situation in the Middle East. Congressman, thank you.

ROGERS: Hey, thanks, Chris. Appreciate it.

WALLACE: Coming up, what happens now to the president's Middle East policy? We'll bring our Sunday group into the conversation when we come right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I have come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WALLACE: That was President Obama in Cairo three years ago trying to reset relations between the U.S. and the Islamic world.

And it's time for our Sunday group: Brit Hume, Fox News senior political analyst, Liz Marlantes of the Christian Science Monitor, Bill Kristol from The Weekly Standard, and Jeff Zeleny of the New York Times.

Well, we all remember the Cairo speech, where the president said that the trauma of 9/11 had led us, quote, "to act contrary to our ideals" and promising to change course.

Brit, in the aftermath of what we've seen this week, how is the president's policy as set forth in Cairo looking?

BRIT HUME, FOX NEWS: Well, it looks a little ragged. And I would say that they were remarks that he made even before the Cairo speech that are even more to the point, when said in an interview on November 21, 2007, "I truly believe," he said, "that the day I'm inaugurated not only does the country look at itself differently, but the world looks at America differently," and he immediately launched into a discussion of the Muslim world and his background in Muslim countries, in Indonesia, the fact that his half-sister is Muslim, and he want to say that, in the end, this will ultimately make us safer, something the Bush administration had failed to grasp.

What I would say about that is that I think we're seeing in these events this week the further education of a president who was -- and to some extent remains -- a foreign policy novice, and he is learning that his mere Obamaness and all that goes with it is simply not sufficient to -- to change the fact that the Middle East remains a tinderbox subject to being lit ablaze by even a small match, which I think that movie is at best a small match.

WALLACE: Liz, what happened to the reset in relations between the U.S. and the Islamic world?

LIZ MARLANTES, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR: Yeah, well, obviously, it's been -- it's been hard going. And, you know, as Obama himself said in that 2009 speech, it was -- you know, anti-Americanism, tensions between the Middle East and the U.S. have been going on for decades, this was not something that was going to instantly change. He said that.

But I do, you know, kind of agree with Brit that to some extent this is another area where Obama now is probably suffering the consequences of what were probably inflated expectations, that -- you know, going there and listening was somehow going to change things. And, you know, obviously, it's a -- it's a really difficult problem, and it seems like we've got, you know, internal power struggles going on in these countries and not a lot of good options.

WALLACE: You know, Bill, when I talked to Ambassador Rice and discussed what critics are saying about U.S. foreign policy, which she did not like, I was thinking of you, this notion that the U.S. is in disengagement from the Middle East, that we're in retreat, that our friends and our enemies don't know who we are or how much they can count on what they believe about us.

Obviously, you know, the people who killed the Americans, the people who stormed the embassy, they're responsible, but to what degree do you think Obama's policies have contributed to the events this week?

BILL KRISTOL, THE WEEKLY STANDARD: I think they have contributed, and I -- I really wish it weren't the case, that is, I wish -- and Brit (inaudible) that President Obama has -- educated since his Cairo speech. And I thought, actually, about a year ago, after the surge in Afghanistan, after a -- after the killing of Osama bin Laden, the drone attacks, some tougher stance generally, that perhaps he had learned something from his early pre-election promises and his -- and his speech in the summer of 2009.

But I would say, watching them this week, they are exactly where they were in the Cairo speech. I would -- they have -- the White House press secretary, not just some political hack, the White House press secretary saying from the White House podium that this movie is the -- this trailer of a movie that no one has seen...

WALLACE: That's what U.N. Ambassador Rice said.

KRISTOL: ... and now the U.N. ambassador is saying that -- that it has nothing to do with U.S. policy, nothing to do with U.S. -- what the U.S. stands for. I mean, really, that's the position of the U.S. government, not just the Obama campaign? That's one thing; that's just politics. The U.S. government, the U.S. administration is saying that?

And what is the actual official response? To send an FBI team over -- over to take a look at the situation, except it now turns out, it's being reported, that the FBI team can't land -- can't go to Libya. They pulled them back yesterday because it's not a safe enough situation to do their forensic investigation. It's like a parody of going back to the 1990s. I did think there was bipartisan agreement that that way of addressing national security threats was not effective. It's what we did in the '90s. It didn't work. And now they're right back where they were before 9/11.

WALLACE: Jeff, do you think -- because, I must say, I find it astonishing myself the idea that they would say this is all about the video -- do you think that they really believe that? Or do you think they see that as an easy out and, as I suggested to Mike Rogers, now they don't have to answer questions about policy, because it has nothing to do with policy?

JEFF ZELENY, THE NEW YORK TIMES: I'm not sure if they believe it or not, but they're certainly doubling down on it, so they are leaving us every -- it looks like they believe it. I mean, even privately, even in conversations I have had over the weekend with senior administration officials about this, no one is leaving open the possibility that, hey, that this is just a line we're giving as we look into it further.

So it seems to me that they're opening themselves up to -- or they're leaving themselves very vulnerable here. You know, when -- once more answers are known, I think, as Chairman Rogers was saying, he was giving a very sort of even-handed response, I think, saying, look, we still don't know the answers to a lot of the questions of what happened over there.

So if this administration -- if it turns out a month from now that there was a major intelligence failure, I think this is going to look pretty irresponsible and silly right now, to say that this is all because of a trailer for a video.

But, look, I was at that speech in Cairo in June of '09. And I'm just struck by how much has changed and how much the -- I mean, it almost looks -- some of those comments sound, I don't know if naive, but quaint, given everything that happened with the Arab Spring and things, and it's certainly not really a relevant -- I mean, I think there's time for a reset of that reset. And we haven't heard the president talk about his policy a lot since then.

WALLACE: Well, and that brings up a very fair question, Brit, which is the Arab Spring. Obviously, things were going to be more complicated after the Arab Spring. You couldn't just call up Hosni Mubarak and say, "Stop the protesters." You've got democracies instead of dictators. You've got Islamic groups who are now free to express themselves and, yes, to protest. How could the president have better managed what was always going to be a messy transition?

HUME: Well, there are a couple of things. One -- two ways to look at this. One is how the president and his team dealt with the actions in the countries that were most affected by the Arab Spring. It seems we have kind of a mixed set of results.

The other question revolves around when militant Islamists are considering how to attack or undermine the United States, it is believed that one of the things that they deeply respect is power and force. They understand it; they recognize it; they fear it; and it worries them.

So if you look at the -- at the -- at the fact that we're -- you know, we're out of Iraq, didn't leave behind a force, we're pulling out of Afghanistan, does that look to them like strength or weakness and a possible opportunity?

If it turns out that Al Qaida was deeply involved in the Benghazi attack, it will be a very significant Al Qaida success and the first that they've had, really, since the heyday of -- of Al Qaida in Iraq. That will represent, it seems to me, a serious sign of failure of the administration's policies throughout the region.

WALLACE: All right. We have to take a break here. But coming up, we've covered the policy, next the politics of national security as it's playing out on the campaign trail.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

WALLACE: Still to come, our Power Player of the Week.

(UNKNOWN): It's costing us \$200 billion a year to care for people with Alzheimer's.

WALLACE: Now, 5 million Americans have the disease.

(UNKNOWN): That is going to grow to \$1 trillion a year by 2050.

WALLACE: Stay tuned. Our panel will be right back.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MITT ROMNEY, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: The first response to the United States must be outrage at the breach of the sovereignty of our nation, and apology for America's values is never the right course.

OBAMA: Governor Romney seems to have a tendency to shoot first and aim later. And as president, one of the things I've learned is you can't do that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WALLACE: President Obama and Governor Romney with punch and counterpunch over the U.S. reaction to the violence in the Middle East this week. And we're back now with the panel.

Well, it has certainly been the big political question in Washington this last week: Did Mitt Romney make a mistake attacking the president's policies just five hours after we found out that those four Americans had been slaughtered in Benghazi?

Brit, as you've look back at this over the last few days, now it's played out, what do you think?

HUME: I think what he said was correct, but it was clumsy, and it opened him up to charges that he made a terrible mistake. We had an almost ludicrous overreaction in a lot of the media about it, in which what he did became the big story, rather than what was happening over there, which was not a great moment for our national media, I'm sad to say.

You know, he could have waited. It might have been better if he had. But, look, what he was criticizing there was a statement that -- what we were talking about in the first panel, which is the administration's emphasis on this video, and attacking it, and then reiterating that -- Cairo embassy not only said that, and then it reiterated it later after these events had unfolded. So they doubled down on it.

Now, eventually the White House walked it back and so on. But the next thing you know, the White House is saying the same thing that it's all about the video. So my sense is that he was on the mark. He might have timed it better or said it better.

WALLACE: Liz?

MARLANTES: I think it was a tricky week for both Mitt Romney and President Obama. I mean, when you have a week when Obama is being compared to Jimmy Carter and Mitt Romney is being compared to Richard Nixon, it's not really a week that either campaign is probably going to want to remember.

That said, I think, you know, in the short term, Romney's statements got more attention. And I think the problem that Romney has in this situation is sort of twofold. One was that he did seem political. It seemed like he was acting more in the interests of his campaign than in the interests of the Americans overseas who maybe were in danger at the time.

And -- and, secondly, it's been hard for him to articulate exactly what he would be doing that's -- that's different. I mean, he says he would be shaping events, rather than letting events shape his policy, but he doesn't say exactly what that means. It means -- is he saying he would not have withdrawn from Iraq, he would rather that we were still there?

You know, the consequences of what he actually seems to be implying are not necessarily policies that would be popular with Americans right now. And so I think it -- it makes it hard. He has this sort of sweeping language about how he wants to project strength, but he won't say exactly what that means, because I think to some extent, if strength means military force, if strength means, you know, spending more money on foreign aid, that's not popular either. I mean, it's -- it's not clear what those actions would be.

WALLACE: Bill, I want to pick up on that, because even if Romney's timing was wrong, as some people think, there's certainly a legitimate debate to have over the president's foreign policy. And we had some of it today with Ambassador Rice and Congressman Rogers. And yet I talked to top officials in the Romney campaign yesterday, and they say they have absolutely no plans for a major foreign policy speech in the next few weeks before the debates. And I guess the question is, why not?

KRISTOL: Well, I'm keeping home alive that they actually will think that they should address the issue that's on the mind of every American now, which is, what is going on over there, and why is it happening, and what would the next president do to address it? It's crazy not to address it. It's -- this is what people want to hear about.

I heard from a congressional candidate, Republican congressional candidate yesterday sent me an e-mail and said he's interested personally in foreign policy, he hasn't talked much -- so much about it, and his audiences haven't asked him much about it over the last 14 months. He said suddenly, last week, he didn't even begin to raise it, particularly on Wednesday or Thursday, but suddenly all the questions were about it.

People -- the next president is going to have to deal with this. What are you going to do? He needs to address it.

Brit's right. He was a little clumsy at first, but it's better to be clumsy and correct than timid and silent. And I really hope, as someone who hopes Romney wins, I hope he is not timid and silent over the next couple of weeks and that he does what Liz said and lays out his foreign policy agenda.

And they're very spooked. I talked with some Romney people, too. Got to be very careful, though. War is unpopular. Afghanistan is unpopular. Iraq, horrible memories. Which convention spoke more about war? Which convention didn't -- wasn't timid to say the word "Afghanistan"? It was the Democratic convention. And they got a bounce. And the Republicans, who shied away totally from foreign policy, didn't get a bounce.

So maybe the American public's a little more mature and serious than these campaign strategists think, and maybe they would actually like to hear what the next president would do about this crisis.

WALLACE: Jeff, you know, I think it'd be fair to say there's a growing sense among political observers, as we see these polls, that Romney is losing right now, not that he's lost, not that it's over, but that he's losing ground. And I think the question is, after this selection now of Paul Ryan, which was seen as a pretty bold choice, they seem to have gone back into something of a crouch and are not campaigning on a bold agenda as a candidate of reform. What are they thinking at Romney headquarters in Boston?

ZELENY: I think they are frustrated by the sort of growing storyline that he may be losing. But I think losing is the wrong way to look at it. He's not losing or he hasn't lost. He probably has failed to take advantage of this moment of the, really, three weeks since naming the vice presidential candidate and into his convention.

I mean, the jobs report number a week ago on Friday -- seems like a long time ago -- was something that his campaign thought would reset things. It really didn't. So they have had a hard time sort of, I think, resetting the race and gaining ground, but I think it's absurd to say that he has lost or is losing.

I mean, the CBS-New York Times poll last week showed among likely voters it is still a 3-point contest, within the margin of error. So that is with even what Romney's own advisers will concede that they had not the smoothest of weeks. So this is still an even race. This is still anything could happen.

But out in battleground states across the country, the Obama campaign seems to be performing a little bit better.

So...

WALLACE: But why this reluctance...

ZELENY: I hear the same thing from...

(CROSSTALK)

WALLACE: Why this reluctance to give a major foreign policy speech? Why the reluctance, when there's all this criticism that, you know, he favors -- his policies favor the rich over the middle class, why not give a major speech and explain -- and -- and you can hear people clamoring for it -- what are some of the things he would do in tax reform that would -- that would hurt the rich?

ZELENY: The overarching thought in the Romney campaign is still that this election is about President Obama and that they can win this election by this growing sentiment that it's time to fire President Obama.

Now, I'm not sure that that's right. I mean, they have to give -- it seems a lot of Republicans are hungering for more of a reason to hire Governor Romney. I'm not convinced that they won't give some kind of a big speech. I don't know if it'll be a foreign policy speech, but they have -- see the same information that everyone here sees and talks about. I think they know that they have to kick things up a little bit.

HUME: Even if this ends up being, in effect, a referendum on the president and his record, the challenger still has something that must be done, and that is to present himself as a plausible and acceptable presidential alternative.

Now, Romney's got the presidential bearing down. He's fine on that. He presented himself at his convention as a nice guy and a normal person with a great family. He's got that down.

What he didn't do was dwell at length on the economic policies that he would put in place. And a big piece of being a plausible president is being knowledgeable and have a deep sense of the world and the United States' place in it and be able to differentiate the policies you'd pursue from the other guy. And he hasn't done that. So, you know, he may get the referendum, but if he hasn't done his part and stepped up as a plausible alternative, he might lose anyway.

WALLACE: Liz?

MARLANTES: Yeah, I mean, I -- I think it has become a difficult storyline for Romney that he's losing. We've had a lot of stories in the last week or two about the differences in the polls, and that is a difficult position for a candidate to get into, because the entire media lens starts to be through that lens of he's the losing candidate right now. And I think even the reaction this week to his statement, you know, was seen as an act of desperation, well, that's the way you cover a candidate who's losing. So that is something that I think the Romney campaign is going to have to do something to turn around, because right now it's not helping them.

WALLACE: And, Bill, we got less than a minute left. I guess what confuses me is when he picked Ryan as his running mate, I thought, well, that's a statement that he's going to come forward with a bold, affirmative, positive agenda, he's going to be the candidate of reform. And yet he has, after naming him and getting a little bump in the polls and people getting excited, he hasn't capitalized on that.

KRISTOL: Maybe they'll learn the lesson from the fact that, from the day he named, August 11th, until the Republican convention, Romney gained in the polls. He narrowed a 4.5 point gap to 1 point in the RealClearPolitics average. It's back up to 3 points when they've gone back to the pre-Ryan campaign. Maybe they should follow up on the consequences of the Ryan pick, which are positive.

WALLACE: Thank you, panel. See you next week. Don't forget to check out Panel Plus, where our group picks right up with this discussion on our website, foxnewssunday.com. We'll post the video before noon

Eastern time, and make sure to follow us on Twitter @foxnewssunday.

Up next, our power players of the week.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

WALLACE: They are one of Washington's power couples. He was a top executive at AOL and CBS; she used to write sitcoms. Now they're taking on the fight of their lives. And they're our Power Players of the Week.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

GEORGE VRADENBURG, US AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S: It's the only disease in the top 10 killers that has no means of prevention, cure or treatment.

WALLACE (voice-over): George Vradenburg is talking about Alzheimer's, the disease that robs people of their memory, then mind, and eventually kills them. He and his wife of 43 years, Trish, have donated millions of dollars to launch an organization called Us Against Alzheimer's.

(on-screen): What is the goal of Us Against Alzheimer's?

G. VRADENBURG: A means of prevention and treatment by the year 2020.

WALLACE: But is there any reason to believe that's possible over the next eight years?

G. VRADENBURG: Yes, the answer is 2020's feasible. Is it -- is it a guarantee, a lock? No. Otherwise, why should we be in the game?

WALLACE (voice-over): What makes this group different is it is part philanthropy that invests in research, but it's also a political action committee, contributing to candidates who back their fight.

This week, the Vradenburgs were on Capitol Hill meeting with Congressman Jim Moran.

G. VRADENBURG: Right now, cancer is allocated about \$6 billion a year, and we're making progress. HIV-AIDS, \$3 billion a year. Alzheimer's, \$450 million a year.

WALLACE: And Vradenburg says, if we don't find a treatment or cure for Alzheimer's, it will bankrupt the nation. Now, 5 million Americans have the disease, but with aging baby boomers, that will double in 30 years.

G. VRADENBURG: It's costing us \$200 billion a year to care for people with Alzheimer's; 70 percent of that comes from Medicare and Medicaid. That is going to grow to \$1 trillion a year by 2050.

WALLACE: The Vradenburgs' fight against Alzheimer's is personal. Trisha's mother, who was a hard-charging New Jersey Democrat, died of the disease 20 years ago.

TRISH VRADENBURG, US AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S: We saw her just go downhill from a towering human being to a person who didn't know us.

WALLACE (on-screen): Tough question: Do you worry that you're going to get it?

T. VRADENBURG: Those days where I can't find my keys, I -- yeah, I worry.

WALLACE: Is it true you have not been tested?

T. VRADENBURG: Until I know that there's a possibility of having some way to diminish or stop or arrest Alzheimer's, I have no need to know if I have a death sentence or not.

WALLACE: Honestly, how much of this crusade is the fact that you want to find a cure or a treatment?

G. VRADENBURG: Of course. And me. Whether I'm the caregiver or the victim, one out of two over 85 have this disease.

WALLACE (voice-over): And so George and Trish Vradenburg keep sounding the alarm, keep trying to build a political movement against a killer they say is coming for them and so many of us. **G. VRADENBURG:** With Alzheimer's, it is a cruel disease that's going to take tens of millions of lives, and we can't get ourselves together, so that's frustrating.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

WALLACE: If you want to learn more about the Vradenburgs' cause, check out their website, usagainstalzheimer.org.

And that's it for today. Have a great week. And we'll see you next "Fox News Sunday."

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