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Subject: AP - Rice defends Benghazi remarks

AP - Rice defends Benghazi remarks
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U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice said Wednesday her early account of the attack that killed the U.S. ambassador to Libya and three other Americans in Benghazi was based on the initial intelligence community assessments and was always subject to review and updates.

She said she respected Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who has been critical of her, but said "some of the statements he's made about me have been unfounded, but I look forward to having the opportunity at the appropriate time to discuss all of this with him."

Her comments attributed the attacks to a mob enraged over an anti-Muslim video posted on YouTube were widely denounced by Republicans during the U.S. presidential campaign. The attack came on the 11th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States, and her critics said it was clearly a terrorist attack timed to take place on the anniversary.

The focus has fallen on her because she is a longtime White House insider and is believed to be President Barack Obama's first choice to replace Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who is not expected to stay on during his second term.

Rice told reporters outside the U.N. Security Council: "As a senior U.S. diplomat, I agreed to a White House request to appear on the Sunday shows to talk about the full range of national security issues of the day, which at that time were primarily and particularly the protests that were enveloping and threatening many diplomatic facilities, American diplomatic facilities around the world, and Iran's nuclear program."

Hours before the Benghazi violence, a mob in Cairo attacked the U.S. Embassy there to denounce the videos as anti-Islamic blasphemy. Killed in the Benghazi violence were Ambassador Chris Stevens, foreign service officer Sean Smith and two former Navy SEALs, Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods.

Rice said, "The attack on our facilities in Benghazi was obviously a significant piece of this" pattern.

"When discussing the attack against our facilities in Benghazi, I relied solely and squarely on the information provided to me by the intelligence community," she said.

"I made clear that the information was preliminary, and that our investigations would give us the definitive answers," she added.