

AMERICAN EMBASSY IN PAKISTAN SPENDS \$70,000 TO AIR AD DENOUNCING "INNOCENCE OF MUSLIMS"



To quell the public rage in Pakistan over the anti-Islam video, the American embassy in Islamabad is spending \$70,000 to air an ad denouncing the anti-Islam film and telling viewers that the US had nothing to do with it. The film features President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, both critical and disapproving of the video. "We absolutely reject its content and message," Clinton says in the advertisement. Obama says that he condemns attempts to "denigrate the religious beliefs of others," but in the same breadth admonishes that the "senseless violence" that followed was also not warranted. The embassy put together small clips of Obama and Clinton that show them denouncing the film and sing paeans about American open-mindedness and acceptance of all religions. The comments are subtitled in Urdu, the prime Pakistani language. Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said that to ensure a widespread audience, the spot was going to be aired over seven Pakistani networks that have a probable audience of 90 million people. An angry mob of thousands of enraged protestors had attempted to storm the US embassy, only to be thwarted by the local police and military troops, prompting embassy staffers to assuage the local hurt through a video message. On Friday, which is a weekly holiday in Pakistan, around 15,000 people are expected to demonstrate around the US embassy. The Pakistan army has been summoned to provide protection. The government has designated it as "a day of love for the Prophet," with law enforcers requesting protestors not to resort to violence but protest peacefully. Speaking to reporters in Washington, Nuland said, "The sense was that this particular aspect of the president and the secretary's message needed to be heard by more Pakistanis than had heard, and that this was an effective way to get that message out." The advertisements end with the seal of the American Embassy in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, to ensure that everyone understands that it is an official message. Facebook users have reacted differently to the video after it was posted on the social site by the embassy. Many demanded that if the US is so sincere they should hand over the perpetrator to a Muslim country, "We will deal with him according to Islamic rules," wrote one. "People are violent and attacking your embassies because you did not take action against that man. Just handover that man to Muslims for a trial that's it things will cool down," wrote another. Some users have expressed strong outrage over the volatile comments and have called it a violation of the freedom of free speech and abject surrender by the government. Anti-American sentiment has escalated after years of US drone missile attacks that have resulted in civilian deaths and Osama Bin Laden's brazen killing. The offensive film triggering off pent-up emotions that portends to get out of hand. Meanwhile the US State Department on Thursday has counseled all US citizens to put off non-essential travel to Pakistan. American consulates across the country have been closed to the public all week.