

[By Mounira Al Hmoud](#)

Members of Vermont's congressional delegation are joining in the condemnation of last week's killing of four American officials in Libya — while Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy cautioned that it is at times impossible to guarantee the safety of Americans working in some parts of the world.

Leahy, who chairs the Senate subcommittee that determines funding levels for State Department operations, noted that the annual legislation produced by his panel has included more funding for U.S. embassy security than recent counterpart measures in the Republican-controlled House.

"Every year the U.S. government spends hundreds of millions of dollars to maintain and secure our embassies and to protect our civilian personnel stationed overseas. I support President Obama's directive to increase security at diplomatic posts," declared Leahy, while also warning: "We must also recognize that U.S. diplomats and foreign aid workers serve in many places where it is impossible to completely guarantee their safety, and that they cannot carry out their work behind the walls of fortresses."

Last Tuesday, Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other American consular personnel were killed in an attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya. The attack was part of a massive uprising in the Middle East following the posting online of an anti-Islamic video — allegedly produced by an American citizen — mocking the Prophet Mohammad.

Leahy, who authored several provisions in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring — including conditions on U.S. military aid to Egypt requiring that country's government to support a transition to democracy and abide by its 1979 peace treaty with Israel — stated: "The shocking and senseless murders of Ambassador Stevens and other U.S. Embassy personnel in Libya should be universally condemned. It is outrageous that religious intolerance has reached such extremes that our diplomats — or any diplomats — are targeted."

Independent Sen. Bernie Sanders said he was deeply disturbed and saddened by the deaths of

the four Americans.

"I join President Obama in condemning the senseless acts of violence at our diplomatic post in Benghazi. The families of the four Americans who were serving our country are in our thoughts and in our prayers."

Democratic Rep. Peter Welch, the state's at-large member of the U.S. House, said the United States must maintain its commitment to help build strong democratic institutions in the region.

"These are trying times in the Middle East and elsewhere. The United States must take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of our diplomatic personnel and civilians," Welch said.

"I strongly urge our allies to help quell the violence. We must remain clear-eyed in the face of this turmoil and focused on our long-term strategic interests. A stable and democratic Middle East is extremely important for America and the world."