



## House GOP warns President Obama not to push Susan Rice as next secretary of state

By: GERRY SHIELDS - November 20, 2012

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WASHINGTON — UN Ambassador Susan Rice's climb to replace Hillary Rodham Clinton as secretary of state grew steeper yesterday when 97 House Republicans sent a letter to President Obama calling her unfit for the post after misleading the nation over Benghazi.

The letter lambastes Rice for appearing on Sunday talk shows five days after the deadly terrorist attack on the Benghazi consulate and saying that the assault was the result of a spontaneous protest over an American video mocking the Prophet Mohammed.

The Sept. 11 Libya attack killed Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans. The administration eventually conceded the incident was a terrorist attack.

"We believe her misleading statements over the days and weeks following the attacks on our embassy in Libya that led to the deaths of Ambassador Stevens and three other Americans caused irreparable damage to her credibility both at home and around the world," the letter stated.

House members have no role in the nominating process for Cabinet members, which are voted on in the Senate.

But the letter sends a signal to the White House that they will face significant opposition in nominating Rice, said former Sen. John Breaux (D-La.).

"It carries weight in the sense that the administration sees they're going to have a real fight on their hands," Breaux said. "You don't want to start off the year with a battle you don't need to fight."

The letter alerts Senate Republicans that Rice's opposition could be part of a political groundswell, said John Samples of the Center for Representative Government at the libertarian Cato Institute.

"This could grow into something larger," Samples said. "It could take off."

Democrats are defending Rice, saying that she was only repeating talking points given to her by the administration based on the intelligence at the time. Former CIA Director David Petraeus told congressional intelligence committees last week that he knew the assault was a terrorist attack but withheld some information as classified.

Rice "propagated a falsehood," said the letter, spearheaded by Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-SC).

"Ambassador Rice is widely viewed as having either willfully or incompetently misled the American public in the Benghazi matter," the letter states. "Thus, we believe that making her the face of US foreign policy in your second term would greatly undermine your desire to improve US relations with the world and continue to build trust with the American people."

None of the House Republican leadership signed the letter.

The Senate already has its own anti-Rice movement, led by John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC).