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The Ticket

## Obama apologizes to Karzai over Bagram Koran burnings

By Olivier Knox

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President Obama apologized Thursday in a letter to Afghan President Hamid Karzai for the burning of Korans at the largest American military base in Afghanistan, according to the White House and Karzai's office. The incident at Bagram Air Base has fueled days of angry protests in the war-torn country.

"I wish to express my deep regret for the reported incident," Karzai's office quoted Obama as saying in the message. "The error was inadvertent; I assure you that we will take the appropriate steps to avoid any recurrence, to include holding accountable those responsible."

Three days of protests over the incident have left 14 people dead, including two American soldiers shot dead when an Afghan soldier turned his weapon on them at their base in Khogyani in eastern Nangarhar province, district governor Mohammad Hassan told AFP.

White House officials declined to challenge the wording.

US Ambassador Ryan Crocker delivered the letter to Karzai on Thursday afternoon, local time, according to US National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor.

Obama "expressed our regret and apologies over the incident in which religious materials were unintentionally mishandled at Bagram Airbase," Vietor said in an emailed statement.

The incident, which occurred on Tuesday, led the Taliban to call on Afghans to retaliate against the US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan and drew a stern rebuke from Karzai himself earlier this week.