When U.S. ambassador J. Christopher Stevens was killed in a flash of hatred in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012, the political finger-pointing began. But few knew exactly what had happened that night. With the ticktock narrative of the desperate fight to save Stevens, Fred Burton and Samuel M. Katz provide answers, says Fox News.

After the fall of Colonel Qaddafi, in 2011, Libya had become an al-Qaeda-inspired, if not al-Qaeda-led, training base and battleground. In the northeastern city of Benghazi, Libya's second-largest city, men in blazers and dark glasses wandered about the narrow streets of the Medina, the old quarter, with briefcases full of cash and Browning Hi-Power 9-mm. semi-automatics—the classic killing tool of the European spy. Rent-a-guns, militiamen with AK-47s and no qualms about killing, stood outside the cafés and restaurants where men with cash and those with missiles exchanged business terms.

It was a le Carré urban landscape where loyalties changed sides with every sunset; there were murders, betrayals, and triple-crossing profits to be made in the post-revolution. The police were only as honest as their next bribe. Most governments were eager to abandon the danger and intrigue of Benghazi. By September 2012 much of the international community had pulled chocks and left. Following the kidnapping in Benghazi of seven members of its Red Crescent relief agency, even Iran, one of the leading state sponsors of global terror, had escaped the city.

But Libya was a target-rich environment for American political, economic, and military interests, and the United States was determined to retain its diplomatic and intelligence presence in the country—including an embassy in Tripoli and a mission in Benghazi, which was a linchpin of American concerns and opportunities in the summer of the Arab Spring. Tunisia had been swept by revolution, and so had Egypt. "The United States was typically optimistic in its hope for Libya," an insider with boots on the ground commented, smiling. "The hope was that all would work out even though the reality of an Islamic force in the strong revolutionary winds hinted otherwise."

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