

## BOOK REVIEW

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## 13 Hours

### *The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*

Zuckhoff M; With the Annex Security Team. *13 Hours: The Inside Account of What Really Happened in Benghazi*. Twelve; 2015. 352 pp. ISBN: 9781455538447

Review by Scott P. Graverson, PhD

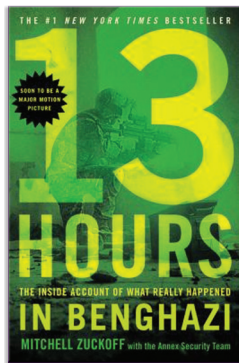
This book details the final hours of an American diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, Libya, one of the most dangerous corners of the globe. Written based on first-hand accounts of the CIA security contractors on the ground, this book eschews the ongoing controversy over talking points, alleged conspiracies, and cover-ups. Instead, it focuses on the actions of the three former Marines, a former Army Ranger, and two former Navy SEALs detailed to Libya to protect CIA case officers. The accounts of those who survived that night paint a harrowing picture of extreme heroism and bravery in the face of overwhelming odds.

The events begin on the morning of 11 September 2012, 15 hours before the attacks on the US facilities. A security guard working with the Americans observed a man wearing the uniform of the Libyan Supreme Security Council casing the compound, "surreptitiously taking photographs of the layout" of the American compound. When confronted, he left. The security guards were on high alert – they shared the information with the CIA contractors, the Libyan foreign ministry, and, ultimately, Ambassador Chris Stevens.

Forty minutes before the attacks began, a pickup truck bearing the Supreme Security Council's insignia parked outside the compound's walls. At 9:42 p.m., "almost the moment the SSC pickup pulled away from the compound, shots and an explosion rang out." The attacks came in waves; intense clashes were fought throughout the night.

News of the attacks on the diplomatic compound reached the CIA annex, where the Operators were eager to engage the attackers and rescue those trapped in the compound. The CIA station chief told the Operators to stand down because engagement would reveal that the CIA had armed security forces on the ground. Defying orders, the six Operators mounted a counterattack and rescued State Department personnel and residents, retreating back to the CIA compound. The remainder of the fight occurred at the CIA compound before help could arrive and the State Department could execute an evacuation. Before it was all over, four Americans were dead, including the Ambassador.

The Operators speculated that had they left immediately, they may have been able to save the lives of Ambassador Stevens and State Department communications specialist Sean Smith. When they finally reached the compound, the Operators found Smith dead from smoke inhalation. The Operators were unable to recover Stevens's body; friendly Libyans later took his body to a local hospital, where his body was recovered. The Operators fended off two more attacks at the CIA annex, the second a fierce mortar attack that killed Operators Tyrone Woods and Glen Doherty. Shortly after that, a quarter-mile-long Libyan militia convoy arrived to escort them to an airfield for evacuation.





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