

about the warnings that were ignored. On October 10, the State Department's Regional Security Officer Eric Nordstrom testified at a Congressional hearing that he had a record of 230 incidents that had taken place in the year leading up to the 9/11 attack. Twice he petitioned the State Department to increase security at the consular compound, but he was ignored.

A commander of one of the most powerful militias in Benghazi stated in an interview that he had met with three Americans on September 8, one of them a consular official. He warned them about the poor security situation at the compound. "Benghazi is now in ruins. Benghazi is not safe. Don't stay here long." It is worth noting that he made these remarks to the American officials at a meeting over how to encourage American business investments in Libya.

Why were these clear warnings not taken seriously? It is very hard to know for sure. According to one report, Secretary of State Clinton did order security beefed up at the Benghazi consulate. For some reason the order was never carried out. Clinton later accepted responsibility for the Benghazi disaster.

Others believe her declaration of responsibility, during the climax of the presidential race and just before the crucial second debate, was merely a tactic to divert attention away from the beleaguered president. As one Obama critic put it: "Four dead in a seven-hour attack, two of them died in the final hours. This government made not one move, with full knowledge of what was going on, to protect those Americans. We had hundreds of people watching in real time, as 30 Americans were being attacked for seven hours. Nobody rode to their rescue."

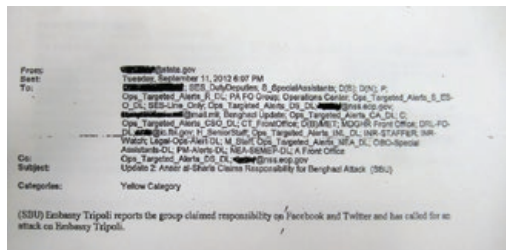
He suggested several theories as to why the events transpired the way they did, including "gross, unbelievable, incalculable incompetence," "bald-faced lying," and a political calculation since Obama has been claiming Al Qaeda terrorists have been decimated under his watch.



Some Republicans called for impeachment proceedings against Obama after the attacks.



Demonstration against Obama for the "Benghazigate" scandal.

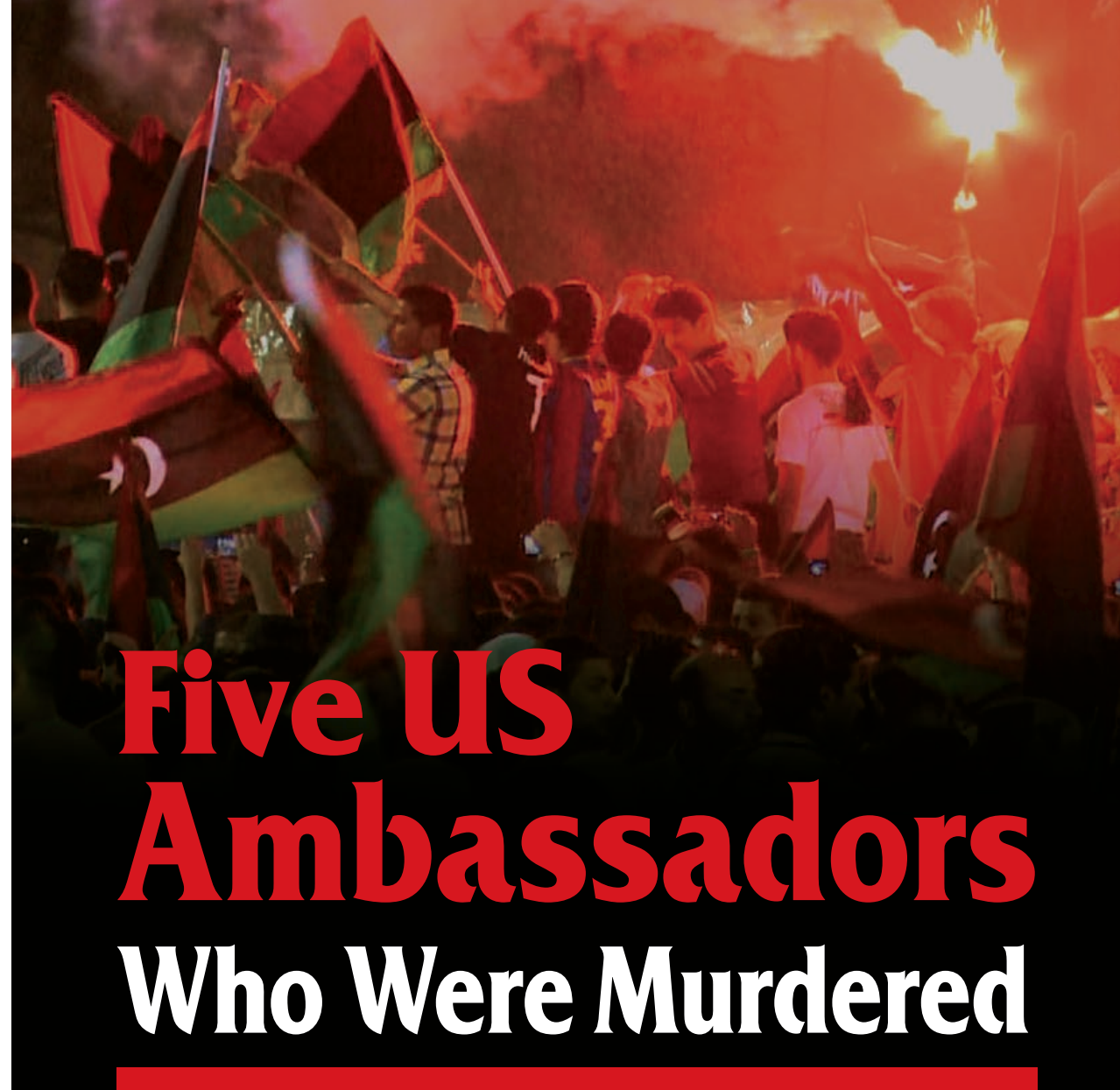


The State Department issued a notice two hours after the attacks stating that Ansar el-Sharia claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Either way, he said, it is a possible scandal of Watergate proportions.

Like so many other scandals, the Benghazi catastrophe leaves many questions unanswered. The ongoing flow of fresh details may lead to sufficient public uproar that a thorough investigation will be launched. Or, the scandal may be quietly swept under the carpet, allowing Obama and his administration to govern without the heavy burden of having to justify his leadership during the debacle.

Only time will tell. ■



Five US Ambassadors Who Were Murdered

America's diplomats carry out vital assignments on behalf of the United States government. They are charged with protecting American interests and citizens abroad. When the United States finds itself at odds with another country, diplomats attempt to find peaceful means of resolving the crisis. At times, they must resort to sharply worded warnings and even threats.

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell once described diplomats as "our first line

of offense." After the September 11 attacks, it was Powell who had to deliver the ultimatum to then-Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. Pakistan had long been guilty of supporting the Taliban government in Afghanistan, sponsors of Al Qaeda. Now Powell told Musharraf in no uncertain terms that he would have to make a decision: either he could cooperate with the United States and continue enjoying good relations or he could keep supporting the Taliban and be viewed by the United States as an enemy.

(Whether or not Pakistan's subsequent behavior was in keeping with its vow to take the American side is another matter.)

America's diplomats also find themselves in physical danger occasionally. An average of three US diplomats or family members of diplomats are murdered by terrorists each year. Since the 1960s alone, over 200 diplomats have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Powell, himself a retired four-star general, once remarked that more ambassadors (the highest ranking diplomat) were killed in the line of duty since World War II than military general officers.

In just one example of the harrowing situations US ambassadors face, during the Tet Offensive of 1968, North Vietnamese forces captured and held the US embassy in Saigon for eight hours. They came within a hairsbreadth of finding and killing Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, who was forced to hide under a desk while US Marines guards fought off a handful of sappers.

Since the last time a US ambassador was killed in the line of duty took place over 30 years ago, it came as a rude awakening to Americans when the ambassador to Libya died in the attack on the US consulate. Following are the stories of the five other US ambassadors who were killed while serving abroad. (Another two ambassadors lost their lives in airplane crashes in the line of duty.)

1979: Adolph Dubs, Afghanistan

It was the morning of February 14, 1979. US Ambassador to Afghanistan Adolph Dubs—known to his friends by the nickname “Spike”—left his home in the Shahr-e-Naw neighborhood of Kabul at 8:40. He entered the black Cadillac that was waiting for him outside.

Dubs had arrived in Afghanistan in 1978, after serving as deputy ambassador to Moscow. This was during the period when the pro-Soviet People's Party overthrew the Afghan government and



Demonstrators scale the wall of the American embassy compound in Sana'a, Yemen, last September 13.



US Marines guard the embassy in Sarajevo, Serbia.

appointed Nur Muhammad Taraki president. Soviet advisors were given cabinet posts in the new government and relations with the West deteriorated quickly. Taraki suppressed the slightest sign of dissent against his weak government with bloody force.

Washington was on the verge of breaking off relations with the new Afghan regime, but Dubs convinced senior State Department officials to wait. Instead, he urged that they send humanitarian aid to the war-torn country. Dubs argued that this was the only hope of preventing the Taraki regime from becoming an outright Soviet satellite. It was critical to America's security and interests in the entire region that Afghanistan be ruled by a stable government that remained on good terms with the United States.

Dub's chauffeur, Gul Mohammed, drove him toward the US embassy compound. They stopped briefly at an intersection when a

man in a police uniform suddenly appeared and ordered him to open the window. Not suspecting foul play, Dubs ordered his driver to obey the man.

The Afghan policeman opened the door of the Cadillac and pointed his gun straight at Mohammed. Three men sat down in the back of the car and forced Dubs to sit between them. Mohammed still believed that this was a legitimate police operation, so he asked whether he should drive them to the Interior Ministry. The men ordered him to drive to the Kabul Hotel instead.

When they arrived, the three terrorists dragged Dubs from the car. The man in the police uniform told Mohammed, “Go to the American embassy and tell them that the ambassador has been arrested.” The chauffeur rushed to the embassy and gave over the news. The embassy staff was shocked. Dubs had established good relations with Deputy Prime Minister Hazifullah Amin. Any hostile activity against him on the part of the government was inconceivable.

Meanwhile, the other three men led Dubs to Room 117 on the second floor. They were not the Afghan police, but an anti-Soviet Muslim terrorist group. The group mistakenly believed that by taking the US ambassador hostage they could force the Taraki government to negotiate with them. They delivered an ultimatum to the Afghan government that three Muslim leaders imprisoned by the government be released by 1 PM—or else.

The Soviet-leaning Taraki government was struggling to remain in power (Taraki himself was overthrown and later killed, less than two years after taking power). It cared little about the welfare of the US ambassador. So when US embassy officials, and later State Department officials in Washington, spent the next four hours pleading with the Afghan government to show restraint, their pleas fell on deaf ears.

For an agonizing four hours, a key group of embassy officials raced to keep their boss alive. They drove from ministry to ministry to convey instructions from US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. The Afghan government

was to *negotiate* with the kidnapers, rather than attempt an *assault* on the hotel room. The American government was concerned—rightfully, it turned out—that the Afghans would seek the fastest solution to the problem. Rash action like that would compromise the safety of the US ambassador.

Deputy Prime Minister Amin was busy meeting with the foreign minister of Iraq,



US Embassy in Kabul.



Adolph Dubs, US ambassador to Afghanistan.