

---

## The Lockerbie Bombing

---

# Bush, Thatcher under fire for coverup

by Thierry Lalevée

The governments of the United States and Britain are coming under growing international pressure to “come clean” with the truth behind the terrorist bombing of Pan American’s flight 103 on Dec. 21, 1988, which killed 259 passengers and 11 people on the ground at Lockerbie, Scotland.

The Bush administration, in particular, was confronted by Bert Ammerman, chairman of the Victims of PanAm Flight 103, in an interview with the *Middle East Insider* newsletter on Jan. 20: “On Dec. 20, Bush invaded Panama . . . saying to the American public, that one American, one Marine was killed, and that another soldier and his wife were accosted. They invaded Panama to protect Americans. As I hear this information, I say to myself that, on Dec. 21, 1988, we had 188 Americans blown out of the air at 31,000 feet . . . and yet I receive a letter [from the White House] that they cannot make any move regarding terrorism because nothing has been substantiated that the PFLP-GC, Iran, and Syria are actively involved. . . . So this leads me to believe in one or two scenarios . . . that the 270 people killed on Dec. 21, 1988 . . . are *allowable casualties*.”

Syndicated columnist Jack Anderson on Jan. 11 and 23 accused Bush of having an agreement with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to cover up the investigation, and questioned the rationale behind the President’s release of \$567 million of frozen assets to Iran in November.

Several recent events show that Bush and Thatcher will find it increasingly impossible to keep the lid on the whole affair.

First, the hard work of the associations of the families of the victims is bearing fruit. Their repeated demand for fuller inquiries is now getting widespread coverage. In England, Dr. Jim Swire of the U.K. Families of Flight 103 distributed on Jan. 31 an open letter to Thatcher asking bluntly: “Did you agree with President Bush to play down the truth?” Earlier, on Jan. 28, the Scottish supplement of the *Sunday Times* of London ran a headline which, for yet unexplained reasons, was not carried in either the English or international editions of the paper: “Thatcher and Bush Accused of a Coverup on

Lockerbie.”

Second, several private investigations have raised various new hypotheses on the plot. On Jan. 23, a “Frontline” investigation aired by the Public Broadcasting System suggested that the bomb may have been smuggled aboard the flight at London’s Heathrow Airport, or even in Cyprus, targeting a CIA team aboard the plane. But Syrian and Iranian intelligence can hit their targets without having to blow up planes, and since most members of the CIA team boarded the plane in Cyprus, it is also unlikely that the terrorists would have put a bomb aboard at the Cyprus airport, to have it explode after its departure from London.

Still, putting the spotlight on a potential link between the bombing and intelligence activities converges on the earlier suggestion made by a security team hired by PanAm’s insurance underwriters, according to which the smuggling of the bomb was facilitated by a CIA-protected drug-smuggling route. The PanAm security team went a step further on Jan. 24 when it polygraphed several airline employees to ascertain whether luggage had been switched during the night of Dec. 21. But suggesting pressure from various quarters, PanAm later tried to distance itself from the investigation.

The net result of these polygraphs is inconclusive; even if a suitcase had been switched in Frankfurt, that would not prove that it actually contained the bomb. Nonetheless, the tests prompted the U.S. Department of Justice to subpoena the polygraph specialist to appear before a grand jury on Feb. 2. Thus, for the first time, an American grand jury will hear evidence on the Lockerbie bombing, setting into motion a legal process which Washington will find hard to stop.

### The link to Syria and Iran

Last but not least, the net is closing around terrorist mastermind Ahmed Jibril and his backers, Syria and Iran. During one of his regular outbursts, broadcast on Jan. 10 on Al Quds Palestinian Arab Radio, Ahmed Jibril came close to directly admitting responsibility for the bombing, when he declared, “Our relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran precede the Pan Am airliner incident by a long period of time.”

That “incident,” as Jibril calls it, is indeed considered as a landmark in the cooperation between Iran and the PFLP-GC. Ahmed Jibril is now also considered a prime culprit in another terrorist atrocity. Investigations conducted in France have ascertained that Jibril was commissioned by Syrian intelligence for the Sept. 19, 1989 bombing of the UTA 772, killing 170 in the Chadian desert. Given Jibril’s responsibility for training the Iranian-backed Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon, there is no contradiction in the involvement of local Hezbollah networks in Africa. Despite the visit of Gen. Ali Duba, chief of Syria General Intelligence, to Paris in November, and his offers of “cooperation,” Syria is now being denounced for the UTA bombing. Additionally, direct Syrian involvement is also coming out in the trial of Tunisian Hezbollah member Fuad ali Saleh.