

# Blair, BP, and Libya: The British Cover-UP

by Scott Thompson

*On Dec. 21, 1988, Pan Am 103 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in the terrorist murder of 259 passengers on board (mainly Americans) and 11 people on the ground. The sole person convicted of this terrorist butchery, was former Libyan intelligence officer Abdel-baset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi. Before examining the reasons why Megrahi was likely framed in a British-orchestrated sabotage of the investigation of the Pan Am 103 bombing, I shall first briefly review the role played by Tony Blair, British Petroleum (BP), and the highest levels in Britain, in the release of Megrahi without acquittal.*

## Blair Sets the Ball Rolling

At a time when all European governments and the United States had broken diplomatic relations with Libya, after numerous Libyan terrorist and other hostile actions, Britain's "New Labour" Prime Minister Tony Blair became the first leader to restore relations with Tripoli. And, for deals that were lucrative for BP, he set in motion the release of Megrahi, without his likely innocence having been proven. Blair himself has handsomely profited from such deals, since resigning from office. The operation began in 2001, with the spadework of then-MI6 chief of the Mideast and Africa Department, Sir Mark Allen.

By 2003, Blair had restored relations, after personal contact with Libyan dictator Moammar Qaddafi. Blair's co-conspirators: billionaire financier Lord Jacob Rothschild, the head of the British Rothschild dynasty and the Inter-Alpha Group

of Banks; his Foreign Policy and Defence Adviser Sir Nigel Sheinwald, now the British Ambassador to U. S.A., where he is closely engaged with Blair's friend, President Barack Obama and his inner-circle of handlers; and Prince Andrew, the British Trade Representative.

Both before and after his time in office, Blair was close to top BP executives. He made two of them Life Peers. He appointed more of them to key subcommittees of his government, than executives from any other company. He regularly dined with Lord Browne, whom he had made a Peer, and the then-BP CEO, who lobbied Blair for the release of Megrahi, so that BP could fulfill Qaddafi's demands for major oil and gas deals worth billions.

It was on Browne's watch, that the Texas BP oil refinery exploded in March 2005, killing 15 and injuring 80, because BP refused to shut down the refinery to repair more than 500 safety violations. Thus, BP was on



*Blair's "deal in the desert" with Libyan dictator Qaddafi, led to the release of the accused "Lockerbie bomber," to the benefit of British Petroleum, and also, Blair's bottom line. Shown (above): Blair and Qaddafi; (left) the wreckage of Pan Am Flight 103.*

felony probation, when in 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded for the same reasons, killing 11 workers, and causing as yet unknown billions in environmental damage and loss of jobs, in the worst spill in world history. So close was Blair to BP, that it became widely known as “Blair Petroleum.”

In 2007, shortly before resigning, Blair made his second official visit to Tripoli, accompanied only by Sheinwald, and negotiated the infamous “deal in the desert” with Qaddafi. This was a broad-reaching accord covering everything from intelligence sharing and military training and supply, to major oil and gas deals, of which BP was the primary beneficiary. Included in the accord, was a Prisoner Transfer Agreement (PTA), which Qaddafi made clear applied only to the Megrahi case, and upon whose fate all other deals with Britain rested.

When Blair was made Special Envoy for the Middle East Quartet, Blair made numerous “secret” trips to meet “Moammar,” and discuss lucrative business deals. According to Qaddafi’s favorite son, the Anglophile Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi, heir, and special British representative, Qaddafi had given Blair a highly paid position on the board of the \$100 billion-plus, Libyan Investment Authority (LIA). Families of U.S. victims of Pan Am 103 immediately cried foul, accusing Blair of accepting “blood money.”

Thus, last August, Blair made another hush-hush trip to Tripoli, which is known only because high-level Libyan officials briefed the local press, where Qaddafi “greeted and entertained Tony, like a brother.” Blair asked Qaddafi’s help to hide his role in the LIA; They set up deals, such as for British-originated J.P. Morgan, which paid Blair £2 million a year for precisely such openings. And, most importantly, Blair asked Qaddafi to save BP. After the Deepwater Horizon disaster, Congress had banned BP from drilling offshore in U.S. waters for seven years, and its stock price had been cut in half, while it was facing major lawsuits and possible criminal charges, making it ripe for takeover. One week after this meeting, BP announced plans to drill deep into Libyan waters.

As Prime Minister, Blair had asked Lord Jacob Rothschild to take a position on the board of the LIA, to convince it to open an office in the City of London. Lord Jacob failed at the time to convince the LIA to open a British office, and resigned in 2009. However, shortly after Megrahi’s release, the LIA opened a front, the Dalia Advisory Ltd., right next to Blair’s posh London office, stating it had an initial \$5 billion to

invest in debt-strapped Britain.

Saif Qaddafi has twice been a special guest of Queen Elizabeth, with whom he discussed the release of Megrahi. The Queen gave her advice and consent to all her prime ministers’ dealings with the Pan Am 103 affair, from the initial investigation under then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, to the “deal in the desert” (including the Prisoner Transfer Agreement), to the progress up to release of Megrahi, and its aftermath.

### **The Deal To Release Megrahi**

Under Gordon Brown, who became prime minister in May 2007, the PTA was ratified, and Libya immediately asked for Megrahi’s release under the terms. When action was not immediate, Libya held up action on BP’s contracts for six months, causing Brown’s Justice Secretary Jack Straw to write his Scottish counterpart Kenny MacAskill (in a letter that was leaked), telling him that negotiations with Libya had entered a “critical stage,” and it was “in the overwhelming interest of the United Kingdom,” to apply the PTA, to Megrahi. Straw later admitted that trade relations, “particularly the BP case,” had been his reason. Former BP executive Straw wrote the letter after Sir Mark Allen telephoned Straw to brief him on BP’s difficulties, and lobby for Megrahi’s release. This contradicts BP’s official statement that it never lobbied for Megrahi’s release.

Also, Brown himself met Qaddafi in a sidebar meeting at a G8 Summit, and discussed the terms of Megrahi’s imminent release. This is known from a letter Brown sent to Qaddafi. However, when Brown came under attack after Megrahi’s release and there was an outcry from all sides of Parliament, Brown refused to answer a myriad of questions, such as whether the BP deal had influenced the decision, or precisely what role he played.

Upon Megrahi’s arrival to a hero’s welcome in Tripoli, Qaddafi praised “my friend Brown, the Prime Minister of Britain, his Government, the Queen of Britain, Elizabeth, and Prince Andrew, all of whom contributed to encouraging the Scottish government to take this historic and courageous decision, despite the obstacles.” Either Brown and the Queen could have blocked Scotland from releasing Megrahi.

However, for Megrahi to obtain early release on “compassionate [medical] grounds,” he first was forced to give up his rights to second appeal forever. This appeal had been ordered on June 27, 2007, by the newly created Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commis-

sion—based on substantial indications that he “may have suffered a miscarriage of justice” in his trial. Despite objections from the Crown, judges had ruled that he could appeal on any grounds, subject to ruling by the Court of Criminal Appeal in Edinburgh.

On Aug. 2, 2009, Megrahi was released, and flown back to Tripoli, accompanied only by Saif Qaddafi. Fifteen months later, Megrahi was living with his family in a luxury townhouse supplied by the Libyan government, and receiving treatments for cancer.

### **Thatcher Sabotages the Investigation**

Megrahi’s alleged accomplice was found innocent Jan. 31, 2001, in a trial in Zeist, The Netherlands, a critical blow to the prosecution’s “conspiracy” arguments.

The official UN Observer at Megrahi’s trial, Dr. Hans Köchler, wrote that the trial was highly politicized; Megrahi’s conviction was based solely on circumstantial “evidence”; that, of the two main witnesses for the investigation upon which the prosecution was based, one had positively identified another initial suspect, failed to identify Megrahi 17 times, and had to be led by judges to identify Megrahi at the trial; the other major witness was to be paid \$4 million for his testimony; testimony from responsible witnesses, that contradicted the “evidence” presented by prosecution was dropped; exculpatory documents were withheld; and, so forth. Further, at least one responsible witness who could have given testimony that some “evidence” had been manufactured by the investigators—namely the timer device used—was not even acknowledged by the prosecution.

Köchler’s observations were corroborated by other witnesses of the trial, and by U.S. and U.K. intelligence and law enforcement authorities.

The original theory for who was responsible for the bombing of Pan Am 103, was that it had been ordered and paid for by the Iranian fundamentalist regime, in direct retaliation for the downing by the *USS Vincennes* of an Iranian Airbus, which caused 190 civilian deaths, including that of 60 children. With only slight variations, depending upon the nation and intelligence agency, the original theory held that Iranian officials subcontracted one of Syria’s 15 intelligence agencies, which, in turn, hired the Damascus-based, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), headed by terrorist Ahmed Jibril, who had only recently sworn to attack U.S. and Israeli aircraft. Some in a PFLP-GC cell in Germany had just been arrested making bombs similar those which downed Pan

Am 103, and studying Pan Am schedules. The German intelligence organization BfV stepped in at last moment, only a short time before the Pan Am 103 bombing, but Jibril’s right-hand man escaped the operation “Autumn Leaves” arrest, apparently with one of the bombs.

But, as the late columnist Jack Anderson, who regularly leaked highly classified intelligence with impunity, wrote in a January 1990 *Washington Post* story, in December 1989, then-British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher telephoned President George H.W. Bush, demanding that the Iran-PFLP-GC investigative theory, be dropped. The reason Thatcher gave, according to Anderson, was that the allies would be “impotent” to retaliate.

Some reliable sources report that what Thatcher meant by this, was that preparations were then underway for the first Gulf War, and the U.S. and the U.K. could not retaliate against two of Iraq’s neighbors under the circumstances. In any event, Anderson added, Bush agreed, and henceforth there were no more official statements about Iran and PFLP-GC; and the U.S. and U.K. investigations shifted to focus on the then-terrorist haven Libya. According to reliable sources, Megrahi would likely to have been found “not guilty” on appeal. And, if he had been found innocent, it would have reopened the Pan Am 103, investigative can of worms (almost two decades after the bombing) and exposed the British sabotage.

### **Getting at the British Role**

Today, there are two separate investigations into the Pan Am 103 affair: One is by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Democrats from New York and New Jersey, whose citizens suffered the majority of murders; the other is by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The committee’s investigation is known to focus narrowly on some of the British diplomatic and intelligence officials and top BP executives, who are believed to have been responsible for Megrahi’s release. After these subjects refused to testify, and the originally scheduled hearings had to be postponed, newly elected Tory Prime Minister David Cameron paid his first official state visit to Washington. He told Nerobama and the Senators, in a private meeting, that the release of Megrahi had been a “mistake,” indicating to the latter that he would request an inquiry. However, on his return to London, Cameron reversed himself, and all U.K. officials are stonewalling co-operation with both investigations.

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