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FRANCE

Gadhafi denies Libya had role in terrorism

PARIS (AP) — Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi insisted Tuesday that his government was never involved in terrorist acts, blaming the bombings of two Western passenger jets on “individuals.” Speaking in a French television interview on the second day of his official visit, Gadhafi denied any state role in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, and the 1989 bombing of a French UTA passenger jet.

He argued that a state cannot be responsible for each of its citizens but said that an era of conflict is ending. “We are coming out of a period of national liberation across the world,” he said. “This struggle, this confrontation is now over. We are in another phase.”

In 2003, Libya paid compensation to families of the Lockerbie victims and agreed to compensate victims’ families from the other bombing.

Gadhafi also said that there are no human rights abuses in Libya, as alleged by watchdog groups, and insisted that “not a single” political prisoner is held by his government.

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SFGate: World Views

Sarkozy courts Gaddafi: Forget terrorism. Let's do business.

So what if today's friend was yesterday's terrorist enemy?

Why should a little terrorist activity in the past - like, say, destroying a jumbo jet in flight, killing all of its passengers and crew members - get in the way of doing lucrative business in the present? What's a little terrorism between friends?

Apparently, that kind of thinking seems to inform or at least to characterize on the surface what's going on right now in the cozying-up relationship of the government of French President Nicolas Sarkozy with that of the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. In the not-too-distant past, the government of the strongman leader of Libya, an oil-rich North African country where democracy does not exist, took responsibility for the bombing of New York-bound Pan Am flight 103 on December 21, 1988. The aircraft exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 259 people on board and eleven people on the ground. Later, "Gaddafi's relations with the West...improved [after] he scrapped a weapons-of-mass-destruction program in 2003 and agreed [to provide] compensation for families of victims of bombings of American and French airliners." ([Telegraph](#))

Also in 2003, the [United Nations Security Council](#) lifted sanctions that it had imposed on Libya following the Lockerbie bombing. Since then, the governments of France, the U.S. and other Western countries appear to have forgiven, if not completely forgotten, Gaddafi's nefarious past. After all, there are contracts to be pursued for technological services related to Libya's oil industry and for Western-made weapons systems that Gaddafi wants and has the cash to pay for.

[Jacky Naegelen/Reuters](#)

Gaddafi was welcomed with plenty of pomp; French industries are cutting deals with Libya, a former terrorism-sponsoring state, that are worth billions of dollars

This week, the Libyan politician is on a high-profile, five-day official visit to France, his first in some 30 years. Upon arrival yesterday at Orly Airport in Paris, the dictator was driven in a white limousine directly to Sarkozy's presidential palace. The French-Libyan business that is taking place during Gaddafi's visit appears to be moving at a brisk pace, with good news, for starters, for Dassault, the French manufacturer of fighter aircraft. "Libya agreed to purchase 14 [Dassault-made] Rafale fighter planes and 60 helicopters....The Rafale...is France's next generation, multi-role combat aircraft, combining both fighter and bomber roles...." Production of the Rafale has been seen as "a flagship program for France's arms industry." ([Reuters](#)).

Yesterday was [World Human Rights Day](#). As Robert Ménard, the secretary-general of [Reporters Without Borders](#), and Hajar Smouni, a researcher with the journalists-protecting organization, noted in an op-ed piece published in anticipation of Gaddafi's France junket, there was a "kind of irony" in the fact that the democracy-crushing dictator would arrive on French soil on that day. Gaddafi's visit to France, they wrote, should prompt the French government to "question him about the absence of political and media pluralism in his country and to remind him of his international commitments regarding human rights. To date, [Gaddafi,]...has shown himself reluctant to enact real [human-rights] reforms. It must be repeated: To dare to criticize him [in Libya] is a crime...that can send any Libyan to prison." Ménard and Smouni noted that, in recent years in Libya, "many journalists and human-rights activists have been arrested, imprisoned or assassinated." ([Le Nouvel Observateur](#))

France's minister in charge of human rights, Rama Yade, "distanced herself from [Gaddafi's] visit. Referring to Libya, she stated: "People disappear in this country, and no one knows what happens to them. The press is not free, prisoners are tortured. The death penalty has been abolished for Libyans but not for sub-Saharan Africans." Yade also said that Gaddafi "must understand" that France "is not a doormat on which a leader - terrorist or otherwise - can wipe off the blood of his crimes. France should not receive this kiss of death...." ([Agence France Presse](#))

However, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said France was right to welcome the former pariah." He [said](#): "The fact is that the world changes. This man - Gaddafi - has moved from practicing terrorism to cooperation in the fight against it. Our policy is one of openness...."

Yesterday, President Sarkozy [said](#) "he had asked...Gaddafi for 'progress' on human rights as he prepared to sign 10 billion euros [worth] of contracts with the visiting Libyan leader." (That's nearly \$14.7 billion dollars worth of contracts.) Ménard and Smouni observed in their commentary in [Le Nouvel Observateur](#): "Signing contracts, gaining a piece of the market [with Libya] - of course! France has to do business, just like the rest of the world. But maybe at the cost of a certain silence" - on the matter of Libya's human-rights record - "that will end up making it complicit" in Gaddafi's rights violations.

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Agence France Press:

Clinton, senators demand full Libya compensation

3 days ago

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Democratic White House hopeful Hillary Clinton and seven Senate colleagues Monday urged Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to ensure Libya fully compensated US victims of "Libyan terrorism."

The eight senators upped pressure on Rice, who has said she plans to visit Libya before long, as Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi visited France.

In a letter to Rice, the senators noted Libya had promised to compensate relatives of attacks on a Pan Am jumbo jet over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988 which killed 270 people and the 1986 bombing of a disco in Berlin which killed two Americans.

"To date, Libya has not fulfilled its commitments to these victims," the senators wrote.

"There are also other cases ... that need to be resolved.

"Congress has made it clear that the US is not ready for full normalization of relations with Libya," the senators wrote.

Washington severed ties with Libya in 1981, two years after radical students ransacked the US embassy in Tripoli.

Following UN pressure, two Libyans eventually stood trial for the Lockerbie attacks at a Scottish court that sat in the Netherlands.

In 2003, Tripoli agreed to pay the families of the victims millions of dollars each in compensation.

Those steps led to the cancellation of UN sanctions and the slow warming of relations with Washington.

As well as Clinton, the letter to Rice was signed by Senators Frank Lautenberg, Robert Menendez, Chuck Schumer, Patrick Leahy, Barbara Mikulski, Norm Coleman and another Democratic presidential candidate, Chris Dodd.

Coleman is a Republican while the rest are Democrats.

Rice would be the highest ranking US official to travel to Libya in more than 50 years