

Libya



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From:  
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY  
Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit MP

18th April 1986  
Rec'd 22/4

Prime Minister

You might like to  
be aware of this.

22/4

*D. Chasman*

I think you will find this letter  
from the Foreign Secretary on the Libyan affair  
together with some leading articles useful.

*Norman Tebbit*

Constituency Chairmen  
Constituency Agents





HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

17 April 1986

*Dear Colleague,*

Many colleagues have been in touch with me about the Libyan crisis and it may be helpful if I let you have a concise statement of the Government's position.

The background to the US action was several years of sustained Libyan-sponsored terrorist activity and threats directed not only against the United States but also against many other countries, including the UK. I am attaching to this letter a list of some of the relevant terrorist activity and a selection of the threats openly made from Libya. Attempts to bring this activity to an end by peaceful means have been made repeatedly, with condemnations by the UN, the Summit Seven, the EC Ministers and others. But without apparent effect on the Libyans. On the contrary clear evidence recently emerged of Libyan-inspired terrorist activities in West Berlin, Paris, and Beirut and of plans for further such attacks in numerous countries. In the face of this evidence of sustained and systematic use of terrorism by the Libyan State the US Government concluded that military action in self-defence was necessary, not least to discourage and if possible prevent further similar attacks.

President Reagan informed the British Government of his intention, seeking our support, and permission for the use of US bases in Britain. He made it clear that he regarded the use of F1-11 aircraft as essential to the success of the operation. The Prime Minister replied that we would support action directed against specific Libyan targets demonstrably involved in the conduct and support of terrorist activities. It was on that basis, and after an assurance that every effort would be made to minimise damage other than to the targets, that we agreed to deployment of US aircraft based in Britain.

We understand that firm instructions were given that every effort should be made to avoid civilian casualties. The cause of the civilian casualties which have occurred is still not clear, and the results of the action are still being assessed. But the five targets approved by the US authorities clearly met the criteria agreed. There is regrettably always a risk of injury to innocent citizens in any action of self-defence. But that is not a reason for rejecting the concept of self-defence in the face of terrorist action which ruthlessly and deliberately sets out to injure and kill innocent people.

/Our agreement





Our agreement to the use of bases in the UK related to this specific US action. There was no blank cheque. If there was any question of US aircraft based in the UK being used in any further action our consent would again be necessary under the long-established arrangements for joint consultation.

Our aim now is to avoid the need for further military action. We are stepping up our efforts to persuade the other Western democracies to join us in putting in place a concerted programme of measures designed to choke the supply of arms to the terrorists, to close their command centres, and to limit their freedom of movement.

We will also continue to play a sustained part in trying to promote a peacefully negotiated settlement in the Middle East on the basis of the principles set out in the Venice declaration, which are upheld by our European partners - respect for the right of Israel to secure borders, and equal respect for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination. But even if we succeed in making progress on this important issue it will not resolve all the problems of terrorism. It is against the particular threat of state-sponsored terrorism, where a state recruits, trains, and finances terrorists, that the US action was directed. It was the same threat which determined Britain's support for that action. It was a difficult decision, but I have no doubt that it was the right one.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Geoffrey Howe*

GEOFFREY HOWE



## LIBYAN STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF TERRORISM

### St James's Square Incident, April 1984

According to the Libyan media, the incident on 17 April 1984 in St James's Square was a "terrorist attack on the Arab People's Bureau". The Voice of the Arab Homeland, in a "political commentary" broadcast on 22 April, asserted

"The people's committees will form an alliance with the secret IRA in view of the fact that it champions the cause of liberating Ireland and liberating the Irish nation from the tyranny of British colonialism. The people's committees will open branches for the secret IRA in all Libyan towns, and if Britain tries to use any means to pressurise and oppress Libyan Arabs, the revolutionary committees will enable the IRA to do whatever it wishes in Britain and retaliate twice as strongly."

### Libyan Support for the IRA

On 2 May 1984, Colonel Qadhafi said that "we do not consider the IRA a terrorist army; they have a just cause, the independence of their country... This is a just cause and we are not ashamed of supporting it with all the means we have...".



Terrorist Attacks Against the USA/NATO Allies

Colonel Qadhafi in a speech given in Libya in June 1984

"We are capable of exporting terrorism to the heart of America. We are also capable of physical liquidation and destruction and arson inside America. If we are to export terrorism we shall export it."

Statement on 9 April 1986, by Colonel Qadhafi

"If any new American aggression is launched against us we shall issue these orders to all the forces of the anti-imperialism centre and to the Pan Arab command to start violence against Americans all over the world, against any American targets. If there is a new US aggression the threat which I have made during the known press conferences will be carried out including turning the Mediterranean into a war zone, Air and sea transport will have to stop".

Statement on 11 April 1986 by Colonel Qadhafi

"Since the threat this time comes from the whole of NATO and is aimed at hitting at our homes and our sons the whole of Southern Europe has been included today Friday within the Libyan counter attack plan without any discrimination."



Taken from Tripoli radio, 26 March 1986

"There are the American Embassies, interests and companies of terror before us, spying on you and conspiring against your own existence and plundering your wealth and wanting to humiliate you. Do you accept this? Let the Arab nation be transported in its entirety into suicide squads and into human bombs, missiles and aircraft ... let your missiles be suicide cells. Chase the American terroristic Embassies and interests wherever they may be."

Colonel Qadhafi in an interview by Hambourg television,  
15 January 1986

"It goes without saying that if the United States attacks us and bombards our children and our people in their homes, we will defend ourselves and do the same, attacking them in their country. We are a small country and we cannot reach the United States so we will send people who will sacrifice themselves, carrying out operations that will be exactly the same as those applied to attack the Americans, French and Israelis in Lebanon ... we will destroy the United States from within."

Rome/Vienna Airport Attacks

Following the Rome/Vienna airport attacks on 27 December, the Libyan Government described the work of the terrorists as "heroic actions".



## LIBYAN TERRORIST ACTIVITY

September 1979

Libyan Embassies in Europe taken over by self-styled revolutionary committees and called 'Libyan People's Bureaux' (LPB).

March 1980

Libyan journalist shot in Regent's Park.

June 1980

Secretary-General of London LPB states approval for killing of Libyan dissidents in Britain. He, and three other Libyans, expelled.

November 1980

Four Libyans convicted for poisoning of two children of Libyan dissident in Portsmouth.

March 1984

Bomb explosions in Manchester and London injuring more than 20 British citizens. Three Libyans convicted and six deported.

17 April 1984

WPC Fletcher shot dead by gunmen firing from Libyan People's Bureau London. 10 Libyan dissidents injured in shooting. Resulted in siege of LPB and ultimately its evacuation and closure.

21 June 1984

A Libyan student shot dead by Libyan gunmen in Athens.

July 1984

Two Libyan diplomats asked to leave London for activities incompatible with their status.

July 1984

Two Libyan dissidents, el Zawi and Fartaz, shot dead in Athens.

6 April 1985

Dinali, leading dissident shot dead in Bonn by Libyan Gunman Tarhuni. Tarhuni sentenced to life imprisonment.

/17 April 1985



17 April 1985

Libyan Arab Airlines manager at Heathrow London deported for anti-dissident activities.

17 April 1985

Libyan (Sodani) previously in UK deported from Belgium.

24 May 1985

Three Libyan students deported for anti-dissident activities.

September 1985

Egyptian police detained four-man Libyan terrorist team in Alexandria. Team were tasked to murder Bukkush, ex-Libyan PM. Sentenced to 25 years prison each.

27 December 1985

Shooting and grenade attacks at Rome and Vienna Airports carried out by Abu Nidhal. Libya provided logistic support for attack in Vienna.

1986

Arms found in Republic of Ireland - including boxes of ammunition stamped "Libyan Armed Forces".

3 January 1986

Libyan student excluded from UK for planning anti-dissident attacks.

Recent Evidence

Berlin Discotheque Bombing: 5 April 1986

On 25 March instructions were sent from Tripoli to the LPB in East Berlin to conduct a terrorist attack against the Americans. On 4 April the LPB told Tripoli the attack would be carried out the following morning. In the early hours of 5 April a bomb exploded in a discotheque frequented by US servicemen, killing 2 people and injuring 230. On 5 April the LPB reported to Tripoli that the operation had been carried out successfully.

Support for IRA

Major arms find in Irish Republic, 26 January, included rifles and ammunition from Libya.

Paris-attempted bombing

In late March intelligence uncovered a plot to attack with a bomb civilians queueing for visas at the US Embassy in Paris. France expelled two members of the LPB for their involvement.





# Members' Brief

No. 13  
17th April 1986

## 1. LIBYA

**American Action.** On the night of 14th April 1986, United States F111 aircraft based in the United Kingdom, along with aircraft of the United States Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, attacked *specific* targets in Libya, demonstrably involved in the conduct and support of international terrorism. This action was taken after the United States had done everything in its power by peaceful means to deter Colonel Gaddafi and his régime from the promotion of terrorism.

**Irrefutable Evidence of Libyan Guilt.** There is no possible doubt about the guilt of the Gaddafi régime. Considerations of security prevent the full publication of the evidence gathered by the intelligence services, although it has been shown in private to Opposition leaders. However, in her speech opening the debate in the House of Commons on 16th April 1986, the **Prime Minister** set out the key facts:

- \* A week before the recent Berlin bombing, instructions were sent from Tripoli to the Libyan People's Bureau in East Berlin to conduct a terrorist attack against the Americans. On 4th April, the Bureau told Tripoli that the attack would be carried out the following morning. On 5th April, the Bureau reported that the operation had been carried out successfully. The bombing incident in Berlin killed two people, including an American serviceman, and injured 230.
- \* Three weeks ago a plot was uncovered to attack civilians queueing for visas at the United States Embassy in Paris. France subsequently expelled two members of the Libyan People's Bureau in Paris for their involvement.
- \* On 6th April an attempt to attack the United States Embassy in Beirut on Libyan Government instructions failed when the rocket exploded on launch.
- \* The United States Government has evidence that Libyans are planning to attack American facilities in many other countries, including ten in Africa.
- \* Libya provides the Provisional IRA with money and weapons. Rifles and ammunition from Libya were discovered in a major find of IRA arms in Sligo and Roscommon in January 1986.

**Damned by His Own Words.** One does not need to rely merely on intelligence to know that Colonel Gaddafi is committed to terrorism. He openly boasts of his objectives. The Prime Minister quoted from a speech he made at Wheelus Base in Libya in June 1984 when he said:

'We are capable of exporting terrorism to the heart of America. We are also capable of physical liquidation and destruction and arson inside America' (*Hansard*, Col. 877).

**Britain and Libyan Terrorism.** The Prime Minister also reminded the House of the tragic murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher by shots fired from the Libyan People's Bureau in London two years ago. After that crime, Britain broke off diplomatic relations with Libya, imposed a strict visa régime on the entry of Libyans into the United Kingdom, banned new contracts for the export to Libya of defence equipment and severely limited Export Credit Guarantee Department credit for other trade.

**All Peaceful Paths Exhausted.** Many countries have supported declarations condemning terrorism. Sadly, all forms of diplomatic and political pressure have proved wholly ineffective. The United States has delivered many warnings to the Libyan régime, particularly since the terrorist atrocities at Rome and Vienna last December, but all to no avail.

**Britain's Support for Military Action.** It was against this background that the British Government decided to give support to American military action. Accordingly, it gave permission for F111 aircraft based in the United Kingdom to be used for action against specific Libyan targets demonstrably involved in the conduct and support of terrorism. The United States wished to use the F111s as well as the Carrier-based aircraft in the Mediterranean because the former were more accurate and would involve less risk of civilian casualties and far less risk to American pilots. As the **Prime Minister** said:

'Had we refused permission for the use of those aircraft the United States operation would still have taken place; but more lives would probably have been lost, both on the ground and in the air' (*Hansard*, Col. 879).



**Our Agreement with the United States.** President Reagan sought and received permission to use the bases in accordance with the long standing consultation arrangements which have continued under successive governments for over 30 years. The Prime Minister emphasised in her speech that it was clearly understood that if there were to be any question of using the United States aircraft based in this country in a further action, that would be the subject of a new approach to the United Kingdom under the consultation arrangements.

**Britain and the United States.** The Prime Minister emphasised the overriding importance of supporting the United States:

'The United States is our greatest ally. It is the foundation of the Alliance which has preserved our security and peace for more than a generation. In defence of liberty, our liberty as well as its own, the United States maintains in Western Europe 330,000 servicemen. That is more than the whole of Britain's regular forces' (*Hansard*, Col. 880-1).

Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that the United States gave Britain vital support in its hour of need during the Falklands campaign four years ago.

**Defeating Terrorism.** The Prime Minister said that she understood people's fears: she stressed that 'terrorism attacks free societies and plays on those fears. If those tactics succeed terrorism saps the will of free peoples to resist' (*Hansard*, Col. 875). She went on 'to ask whether it has not been the failure to act in self-defence that has encouraged state-sponsored terrorism. Firm and decisive action may make those who continue to practise terrorism as a policy think again' (*Hansard*, Col. 880).

**Britain and the United States Stand Together.** The Prime Minister concluded the initial statement which she made on the crisis on 15th April 1986 by saying that:

'Terrorism is the scourge of the modern age. Libya has been behind much of it and was planning more. The United Kingdom itself has suffered from Libya's actions. So have many of our friends, including several in the Arab world.

The United States, after trying other means, has now sought by limited military action to induce the Libyan régime to desist from terrorism. That is in the British interest. It is why the Government support the United States action' (*Hansard*, Col. 730).

## 2. UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT — A FULLER PICTURE

**The New System.** On 19th February, the Government announced that changes would be made to the presentation of statistics published by the Department of Employment in order to give a more comprehensive picture of Britain's jobs market. Figures compiled on this new basis were released for the first time on 16th April. *They show that the number of new jobs has risen faster than unemployment.*

- The unadjusted total of unemployment fell by 13,000 in March, although the seasonally adjusted figure rose by 37,000 to 3.198 million (13.2 per cent). Within that total, the increase of 31,000 in male unemployment was unexpectedly high, partly because of the particularly severe weather conditions last month.
- The employed labour force increased by 117,000 in the fourth quarter of 1985, taking the total increase during the year to 276,000.
- The number of vacancies at Jobcentres has risen by 4,000 to 169,000; vacancies are 13,000 higher than at the same time last year.

**The Nature of Unemployment.** It is also worth noting that many of those who join the unemployment register leave it again quickly:

- Well over a third of a million people leave the unemployment count each month.
- Approximately half the people becoming unemployed leave the register within three months; about 80 per cent leave within a year of becoming unemployed.
- On average, about half a million people a month find a new job — 30,000 every working day.

**990,000 New Jobs.** Preliminary results of the 1985 Labour Force Survey (LFS) show that, as in previous years, estimates of the number of employees and self-employed people should now be revised upwards. The findings of the LFS reveal that *since March 1983, 991,000 net new jobs have been created — more than in any other European country.* These figures will be revised again when the results of the 1984 Census of Employment become available later this year.

RT/JH/RJ