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## Libya's 'torturer-in-chief' offered asylum in Britain in return for help toppling Gaddafi

By ROBERT VERKAIK FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY

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- **Promise of special protection for notorious henchman provokes anger**
- **Calls to put him on trial for his alleged crimes**
- **His security bill could run into millions**

Libya's feared 'torturer-in-chief' has been offered asylum in the UK in return for his help to topple Muammar Gaddafi and his hated regime.

The secret offer to Libya's former foreign minister, Moussa Koussa, was made while he was still in Tripoli and helped persuade him to seek sanctuary in Britain.

But any promise of special protection for one of Gaddafi's most notorious henchmen has provoked anger from those who want Koussa, 62, put on trial for his alleged crimes.

MP Ben Wallace, parliamentary aide to Justice Secretary Ken Clarke, said: 'This man should not be granted asylum or any other special treatment; the only proper outcome is to bring him to justice.'

'Britain needs to make up its mind quickly. There will be no shortage of courts that will readily seek his extradition. The last thing the UK wants is for Koussa to languish, at taxpayers' expense, in legal no-man's-land.'

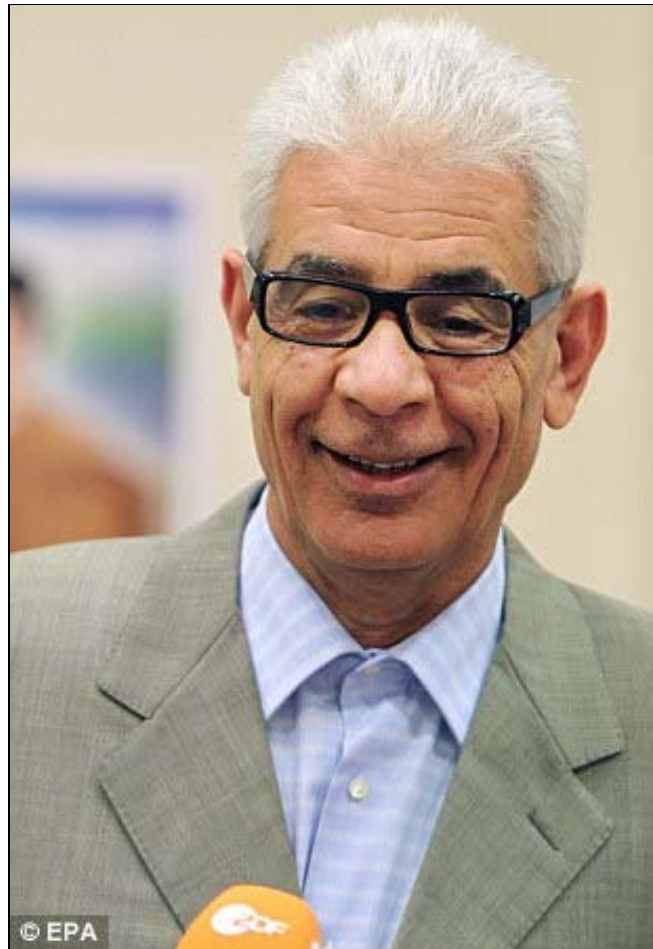
MI6 officers first made contact with Koussa, who has been linked with the Lockerbie bombing and the killing of WPC Yvonne Fletcher outside the Libyan Embassy in London, in the first few days after the UN-sanctioned attacks on Gaddafi's military machine on March 19.

A source told The Mail on Sunday: 'Central to the enticements was the prospect of living in safety in the UK under the protection of the asylum laws. Koussa's greatest concern was what would happen to him once he left Gaddafi.'

'This was not a long, drawn-out operation – once contact had been made it all happened pretty quickly.'

Koussa fled Tripoli last Monday night after telling colleagues that he was seeking medical help in Tunisia. The convoy of official vehicles crossed the Tunisian border and went on to Tunis's Djerba-Zaris airport.

From there, MI6 officers helped charter a private Gulfstream G200 from TAG Aviation to take him to Farnborough, Hampshire.



Moussa Koussa has been offered asylum in the UK in return for his help to topple Muammar Gaddafi and his hated regime



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Koussa is still being questioned by MI6 officers and diplomats in a safe house at a secret location in the Home Counties. His wife, at least one of his children and his extended family remain in Tripoli.

He also has two daughters educated and living in the UK and a son who is a neurosurgeon working in the U.S.

The Foreign Office refused to discuss whether any kind of offer had been made to Koussa and reiterated that there would be no immunity from prosecution. But a spokesman added: 'Discussions are ongoing on a range of issues, obviously (immigration) status is an important issue.'

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It is understood that the talks remain on a knife edge and that Koussa's mental state is fragile.

A Whitehall source said: 'This is a very sensitive situation as we are working towards bringing an end to the Gaddafi regime.'

Geoffrey Robertson QC, the human rights barrister, said Koussa's claim for asylum would be based on his persecution from both the Gaddafi regime and the opposition groups who still viewed him as a 'torturer-in-chief'.



**Moussa Koussa addressing pro-Gaddafi supporters outside the Libyan People's Bureau in St James's Square, London in 1980**

He said: 'If he has given MI6 information about Gaddafi then he is at risk in Tripoli. And he can also say that his life will be in danger in Benghazi from the opposition.'

Koussa's security bill could run into millions of pounds.

Foreign Office officials will meet Scottish police and prosecutors tomorrow about their formal request to interview Koussa over the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie which killed 270 people in December 1988. Prosecutors are hoping to charge six Libyan intelligence agents in

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connection the attack and believe he holds vital evidence.

Mike O'Brien, a former Labour Foreign Office Minister who negotiated with Koussa in 2003 over Lockerbie compensation, weapons of mass destruction and the investigation into WPC Fletcher, said he expected him to claim asylum.

But he also said it would be difficult to prove any of the charges against him, raising the prospect of Koussa living in Britain as a free man.

He said: 'Koussa was head of the organisation (the Libyan intelligence service) that was blamed for much of this, but proving what he knew and when he knew it will be more difficult.

'Although people have to be brought to justice, it is sometimes difficult to find the evidence.'

The Foreign Office said Koussa came here of his own free will, while David Cameron said his decision to flee was a 'serious blow to Gaddafi's authority'.

MI6 is now targeting other key members of the regime, including Abu Zayd Dorba, the head of external intelligence, Mohamed al-Zwai, secretary general of the People's Congress and Abdul Ati al-Obeidi, a former prime minister.

Koussa was the head of the Libyan Embassy in Britain from 1979 to 1980 but was expelled after making death threats against exiled Gaddafi opponents. He returned to Tripoli to head the intelligence services. He was also the architect of a shift in Libya's foreign policy that brought the country back into the international fold.

Jim Swire, whose daughter Flora was killed in the Lockerbie bombing, said Koussa 'could tell us everything' about the attack as Koussa 'was clearly running things'.

Paul McKeever, chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales, said he hoped Koussa would be questioned over WPC Fletcher's murder.

'We have to find the key to the case and this man could have it. The matter of his asylum is for the Government.'



WPC Yvonne Fletcher was killed outside the Libyan Embassy in London

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**Moussa Koussa has been linked with the bombing of Pam Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie which killed 270 people in December 1988**

Mustafa Gheriani, spokesman for the Libyan revolutionary council, said: 'We want to bring him to court. This guy has so much blood on his hands. There are documented killings, torturing. We want him tried here. International law gives us that right.'

Should Koussa be granted asylum, it will not protect him from extradition to other countries where he is wanted in connection with terrorism offences.

America may want to seek his trial over Lockerbie, and relatives of the 170 victims of the 1989 airliner bombing in Niger want Koussa questioned over that attack.

## 'Peace in a week' after rebel chief woos loyal tribes

By BARBARA JONES

General Abdul Fatah Younis, newly appointed chief of Libya's rebel forces, has made a dramatic bid to broker peace with tribes in Gaddafi's own heartland and bring an end to the country's civil war.

Accompanied by French special forces, he ventured beyond the front line soon after dawn on Friday, striking out across the desert towards Sirte under the protection of Coalition warplanes.

Younis, Gaddafi's former minister of the interior and one of the first senior officials to defect to the people's uprising, held a two-hour meeting with tribal leaders at a secret location before returning to Benghazi city.

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**Abdul Fatah Younis, the newly appointed chief of Libya's rebel forces, is hailed at the front line. He has made a dramatic bid to broker peace with tribes in Gaddafi's own heartland and bring an end to the country's civil war**

The Mail on Sunday has learnt that the meeting was the culmination of several weeks' exchange of messages between the two opposing sides.

The General told confidants he believes the Qadhadfa tribe, Gaddafi's own people, and the Ferjanny will be the key to peace in Libya and that it will come soon.

Their submission to change and a free Libya is crucial to a defeat of Gaddafi's regime. Sirte and its citizens were enriched by Gaddafi for many years as part of his hold on power.

General Younis believes the dictator's power has now been fatally eroded. Defections from the regime and the bloody sieges of entire cities such as Misrata, Zintan and al-Zawiyah have convinced the tribespeople that change must come.

'The next journey I take towards Sirte will be open and public, and we will drive on to Tripoli,' the General said.

'I believe this could happen within a week.'

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**Rebels gather on the front line between exchanges of artillery fire between them and forces loyal to Gaddafi near Brega in eastern Libya on Saturday**

A senior aide who accompanied him said yesterday: 'He has been working intensely towards this. He has had to put his trust in the people who have been Gaddafi's closest supporters for years.

'There were great risks in the journey itself but Abdul Fatah was protected at all times by air cover from French warplanes.'

The mission was planned and discussed down to the last detail at a remote rural compound outside Benghazi, where Younis has been in hiding until now.

Early on Friday it involved an initial public show of bravado and solidarity on the front line at Brega, an oil town that has been taken and retaken by Gaddafi's forces several times in the past ten days.

Younis – who had been announced the previous day as military commander-in-chief – arrived in an armoured convoy to be greeted by cheers from the young volunteers manning anti-aircraft guns and handling mortars at a chaotic checkpoint.

He congratulated them on their courage and spoke of the need to be fair in all their clashes with Gaddafi soldiers.

'We are men, not savages,' he told them. 'Above all we are Libyans. There must be no brutality, no revenge beatings or any mistreatment of prisoners. It is important for us to emerge as the new leaders of our new country.

'You are young and enthusiastic but that is not enough. There are rules to observe in wartime as there are in peacetime. I am proud of you all now and I want to be proud of you when this military activity is at an end.'

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A protester shows a sign during an anti-Gaddafi demonstration in Benghazi on Saturday

Younis, his presence providing a much needed boost to the flagging rebels' morale, smiled and posed for photographs.

Then he was helped on his way by the French special forces – young muscular men who refused to be filmed or interviewed. He ordered accompanying vehicles to remain at Brega and turned on to the remote desert road – at all times under direction from GPS signals provided by the French warplanes.

Driven in a two-vehicle armoured convoy towards Sirte, he spoke to the French commandos and to his personal bodyguard.

Lifting the man's handgun to his neck, he told him: 'If we are attacked I want you to shoot me. Do it quickly and thoroughly, right here. Do not get this wrong. I will not die at Gaddafi's hands.'

The aide said the convoy had been warned that a huge encampment of Gaddafi's mercenaries were dug in at a strategic point in the desert.

They were told of intelligence reports that 3,000 men from Chad, the French-speaking African country immediately south of Libya, had spent weeks there awaiting orders.

The Chadian mercenaries were told French jets would be ready to blitz the entire encampment in a matter of seconds if there was an attack.

By yesterday, on the instructions of General Younis, there had been a change in tactics on the front line between Brega and Ajdabiya.

Young hotheads were being restrained as they arrived in the by now familiar cannibalised trucks with heavy guns mounted on the back.

Journalists too were forbidden to mingle with fighters at the front. No one was saying why battle

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lines had been drawn at that point in the road since the early hours of Friday morning.

Among the dusty chaos, General Younis had been able to drive into the desert on the military mission of his life.

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