

What Is Behind The Libyan Defections?

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Much has been made of the defection of several Libyan officials to the West. We are told that the Muammar Qaddafi is losing support even within his inner circle, and the defections underscore the success of the NATO mission. The Libyan government's days are numbered, it is averred.

The latest defections, by Libyan foreign minister and former intelligence chief Moussa Koussa, and Libyan UN representative Ali Abdessalam Treki, may not have been quite as spontaneous as Western officials would have us to think.

"I don't believe that [Koussa] necessarily decided on his own," observes former CIA officer Emile Nakleh. "I judge that intensive behind-the-scenes contacts must have been occurring between him and Western - people from the West, let's say. I would be appalled, frankly, if our intelligence services and our government had not attempted to contact him and encourage him to leave."
(1)

And indeed, that was the case, as both U.S. and British intelligence agents were in regular contact with Koussa in the days leading up to his departure from Libya.(2)

Koussa had a comfortable life in Tripoli. What blandishment would make a man abandon his home and family? He may have been offered money, but at his age, that seems inadequate motivation for adopting a life of being effectively held under house arrest, far from family, and undergoing daily interrogation. It is anticipated that the interrogation sessions are to last from two to three years. (3)

Although a financial reward may someday come his way, that would depend on Koussa telling his interrogators what they want to hear, even if he has to lie to do so, such as taking on blame for the Lockerbie bombing. (4) Koussa is expected to produce. According to a British official, "Absolutely no promises will be made initially. That's a golden rule because it's too early to know exactly what his intelligence is worth." Debriefing sessions can last as long as six hours at a time. "This is all about control. Intelligence staff will make sure he reveals what information they want and when they want it," the official pointed out. (5)

So if no promises were made, how were British and U.S. intelligence officials able to persuade Koussa to leave Libya? They may well have threatened him. The precedent of Yugoslavia is relevant here. In October 2000, a movement led by individuals trained and funded by the CIA overthrew the Yugoslav government. In its place were installed new leaders who immediately set about the task of putting the entire economy at the service of Western capital.

For more than a year beforehand, U.S. intelligence officials visited several Yugoslav officials, who had been placed on a travel ban by U.S. and Western officials. Removal from the travel ban would be theirs, the Yugoslav officials were told, if they agreed to cooperate in the U.S.-backed campaign to overthrow the government. Some were even warned that they would be charged with war crimes if they refused to collaborate, and might be spirited away and placed on trial before the criminal tribunal at The Hague. (6)

It is very likely that similar threats were made against Koussa and other defectors. Already, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Louis Moreno-Ocampo, has announced that investigations into Libyan war crimes are underway, and he hopes to issue the first arrest warrants by May. In addition to Qaddafi and his sons, those said to be under investigation include "some people with formal authority who should pay attention to crimes committed by their people." (7)

Steven Rapp, U.S. Ambassador-at-large for War Crimes Issues, says that "it is not a question of if, it's a question of when" Libyan officials will be charged with war crimes. (8)

More defections can be expected. British agents are currently in touch with ten "leading Libyan officials." (9) And it can be assumed that CIA agents are active as well.

What inducements are offered can only be surmised: immunity from prosecution? Or a promise of a light sentence rather than harsh terms?

Once again, the system of international war crimes justice is seen to serve a political purpose. Indictments against Libyan officials are already promised. There is not a single government on earth that would fail to respond with force to an armed uprising, and it is ludicrous to demand that Libya be the exception. What is taking place in Libya is a civil war, where the West has intervened in that state's internal affairs on behalf of one of the parties in the conflict. Only those on one side of this civil war are to be charged with crimes. More importantly, NATO and its members states, as they rain down bombs and cruise missiles on Libya, are immune from prosecution.

In the weeks ahead, as further defections are announced, these will be presented as evidence of the moral rightness of the NATO war. But it would be more accurate to say that what will be shown is the moral bankruptcy of the West's language of threats.

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<http://www.amazon.com/Strange-Liberators-Militarism-Mayhem-Pursuit/dp/1595265708>

NOTES

(1) Gary Thomas, "Libyan Defection is Potential Intelligence Goldmine," Voice of America, April 1, 2011.

(2) Patrick Wintour, Richard Norton-Taylor, Nick Hopkins, Chris McGreal, "Libya: Moussa Koussa, Gaddafi's Foreign Minister, Defects to UK," The Guardian (London), March 31, 2011.

(3) Don Mackay, "Libya: Musa Kusa May Earn Safe Haven and Several Million

Pounds for Spilling Secrets," Daily Mirror, April 4, 2011.

(4) On the Lockerbie bombing, see William Blum, "The Bombing of PanAm Flight 103: Case Not Closed"

<http://killinghope.org/bblum6/panam.htm>

(5) Dom Mackay, Daily Mirror.

(6) John Donnelly, "US Tries to Turn Yugoslav Officials," Boston Globe, August 29, 1999.

(7) Nancy A. Youssef, Hannah Allam, Jonathan S. Landay, "World Court is Looking into Libyan War Crimes," McClatchy Newspapers, March 4, 2011.

(8) "Libya Suspects will Face Justice at ICC: U.S.," Reuters, March 25, 2011.

(9) Rachel Brown, "More Libyan Defections Imminent," Saturday AM, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, April 2, 2011.

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