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Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

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Former Senior Libyan Intelligence Officer and Bomb-Maker for the Muamar Qaddafi Regime Charged for The December 21, 1988 Bombing of Pan Am Flight 103

Today, Attorney General William Barr, Director of the FBI, Christopher Wray, Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Demers, and Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, Michael Sherwin, announced new charges against a former Libyan intelligence operative, Abu Agela Mas'ud Kheir Al-Marimi, aka, "Hasan Abu Ojalya Ibrahim" (Masud), for his role in building the bomb that killed 270 individuals in the destruction of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland on Dec. 21, 1988.

"I would like to publicly and personally express my deepest thanks to the Lord Advocate of Scotland, James Wolffe, QC, for the tireless efforts of his dedicated prosecutors from The Crown Office and investigators from Police Scotland. These charges are the product of decades of hard work by investigators and prosecutors who have remained resolute in their dogged pursuit of justice for our citizens, the citizens of the United Kingdom, and the citizens of the other 19 countries that were murdered by terrorists operating on behalf of the former Muamar Qaddafi regime when they attacked Pan Am Flight 103," said William P. Barr, Attorney General of the United States. "As to all the victims and the families, we cannot take away your pain from your loss, but we can seek justice for you. Our message to other terrorists around the world is this – you will not succeed – if you attack Americans, no matter where you are, no matter how long it takes, you will be pursued to the ends of the earth until justice is done."

"Today's announcement should remind the world that when Americans are harmed, the FBI and the United States government will never stop pursuing justice for our citizens, no matter where that takes us, how long it takes us to get there, or how difficult the road might be," said FBI Director Chris Wray. "Without the thoroughness and professionalism of our FBI personnel, the Department of Justice, our Scottish partners, and the people of Lockerbie, we never would have found the trail that led us to the men responsible for this attack. We will never forget the loved ones who were lost, and we remain committed to continuing our work to achieve justice for the victims and their families."

"Today's unsealing of criminal charges in the Pan Am 103 case is monumental on several fronts," said Acting U.S. Attorney Michael R. Sherwin for the District of Columbia. "First, the criminal complaint against the alleged 'bomb maker' signifies that the work of federal prosecutors never ends, even after several decades, until all criminal actors are held accountable. In addition, these charges remind the public of the horrific effect that acts of terrorism continue to have on victims and their families. The bombing of Pan Am 103 was historic in that it was, until the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the largest terrorist attack on U.S. civilians in history. It also remains the deadliest terrorist attack in the history of the United Kingdom – for all of these reasons we will never forget and the D.C. United States Attorney's Office will continue to seek justice for all of the Pan Am 103 victims and their loved ones."

December 21, 1988

Pan Am Flight 103 exploded into pieces almost instantaneously when a bomb in the forward cargo area exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, at 7:03 p.m. local time at an altitude of 31,000 feet after 38 minutes of flight. The plane had taken off from London-Heathrow and was *en route* to John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.

Citizens from 21 countries were killed, of that number 190 Americans perished, including 35 Syracuse University students as they were returning home to the United States for the holidays after a semester studying abroad. 43 victims were from the United Kingdom, including 11 residents of Lockerbie, Scotland, who perished on the ground as fiery debris from the falling aircraft destroyed an entire city block where homes had peacefully stood just minutes earlier.

This international terrorist attack, planned by and executed by Libyan intelligence operatives, was considered the largest terrorist attack on both the United States and the United Kingdom before the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Immediately after the disaster, Scottish and American law enforcement undertook a joint investigation that was unprecedented in its scope, and in November 1991, it led to criminal charges in both countries, charging two Libyan intelligence operatives, Abdel Baset Ali al-Megrahi (Megrahi) and Lamem Khalifa Fhimah (Fhimah) with their roles in the bombing.

The criminal complaint filed today charges Masud with destruction of an aircraft resulting in death, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 32(a)(1) and (a)(2), as well as destruction of a vehicle by means of an explosive resulting in death, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 844(i). The charges in criminal complaints are merely allegations, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Criminal Complaint Allegations

According to the affidavit in support of the criminal complaint, the External Security Organization (ESO) was the Libyan intelligence service through which Libya conducted acts of terrorism against other nations and repressed the activities of Libyan dissidents abroad. Masud worked in various capacities for the ESO, including as a technical expert in building explosive devices from approximately 1973 to 2011.

According to the affidavit, Masud participated in the “Lockerbie airplane bombing,” among other plots against the United States and the west, including but not limited to, the April 5, 1986, bombing of the LaBelle Discotheque in West Berlin, Germany. Two U.S. service members were killed in that attack and scores of others left seriously injured or permanently disabled.

Planning and Executing the Bombing of Pan Am Flight 103

According to the affidavit in support of the criminal complaint, in the winter of 1988, Masud was summoned by a Libyan intelligence official to meet at that official’s office in Tripoli, Libya, where he was directed to fly to Malta with a prepared suitcase. He did so, where he was met by Megrahi and Fhimah at the airport. After Masud spent approximately three or four days in the hotel, Megrahi and Fhimah instructed Masud to set the timer on the device in the suitcase for the following morning, so that the explosion would occur exactly eleven hours later.

According to the affidavit, the suitcase used by Masud was a medium-sized Samsonite suitcase that he used for traveling. Megrahi and Fhimah were both at the airport on the morning of Dec. 21, 1988, and Masud handed the suitcase to Fhimah after Fhimah gave him a signal to do so. Fhimah then placed the suitcase on the conveyor belt. Masud then left. He was given a boarding pass for a Libyan flight to Tripoli, which was to take off at 9:00 a.m.

Three or four days after returning to Libya, Masud and Megrahi met with a senior Libyan intelligence official, who thanked them for a successful operation. Approximately three months after that, Masud and Fhimah met with Qaddafi, and others, who thanked them for carrying out a great national duty against the Americans, and Qaddafi added that the operation was a total success.

Of the 270 lost in the bombing, 190 were Americans on the aircraft. Forty-three from the United Kingdom were lost, including eleven lives on the ground in Lockerbie. The remaining victims were from the following countries: Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Philippines, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Trinidad and Tobago. The Department of Justice expresses its profound appreciation to the Scottish government as well as its dedicated commitment to seeking justice for all the victims of the alleged crimes.

Investigative Team

The United States side of the joint investigative team is led by the FBI's Washington Field Office, along with prosecutors from the National Security Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, and the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division. There are many agents from the FBI and prosecutors from the Department who have worked on this case over the years.

Contact Information

Victims of this crime and their families can contact the Department of Justice via e-mail at USADC.PanAm103@usdoj.gov, or by telephone at +1 (202) 252-7045.

Attachment(s):

[Download 20mj252 signed criminal complaint.pdf](#)

[Download 20mj252 signed statement of facts.pdf](#)

Topic(s):

National Security

Component(s):

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