

STATEMENT OF  
ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL WILLIAM P. BARR

November 14, 1991

On December 21, 1988, a terrorist bomb destroyed Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, murdering 259 persons aboard the plane and 11 persons on the ground. For three years the United States and Scotland have conducted one of the most exhaustive and complex investigations in history. Today we are announcing an indictment in this case.

We charge that two Libyan officials, acting as operatives of the Libyan intelligence agency, along with other co-conspirators, planted and detonated the bomb that destroyed Pan Am 103.

At this moment, Lord Fraser, Chief Prosecutor of Scotland, is announcing parallel charges. I have just telephoned some of the families of those murdered on Pan Am 103 to inform them and the organizations of the survivors that this indictment has been returned. Their loss has been ever present in our minds.

The task force created by the United States and Scotland to solve the bombing performed magnificently. The FBI and Scottish police conducted a brilliant and unrelenting investigation. U.S. and Scottish prosecutors guided the investigation with superb skill. Forensic scientists from the United Kingdom and the

United States made contributions of the highest order. I cannot say enough to praise the work of all involved.

For their leadership and hard work, I want to pay tribute especially to: Assistant Attorney General Bob Mueller and the staff of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department; U. S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, Jay Stephens and his staff; and Assistant Director of the FBI, Bill Baker, and the skilled agents and staff of the FBI; and in Scotland, to Lord Fraser and the Scottish police, particularly police officials John Boyd, George Esson and Stuart Henderson.

This investigation is by no means over. It continues unabated. We will not rest until all those responsible are brought to justice. We have no higher priority.

The defendants we indict today are Abdel Basset Ali Al-Megrahi and Lamem Khalifa Fhimah, officers and operatives of the Libyan Intelligence Agency. These defendants are fugitives from justice.

Here is what the indictment charges:

The defendants and co-conspirators made a bomb of plastic explosive and a sophisticated timing device and placed it inside

a Toshiba portable radio cassette player. The radio and clothing were put into a Samsonite suitcase.

On December 20, 1988, the defendants flew from Libya to Malta, where one of them had recently worked for Libyan Arab Airlines and had access to the baggage tags of another airline, Air Malta.

By using stolen Air Malta baggage tags, the defendants and their co-conspirators were able to route the bomb-rigged suitcase as unaccompanied luggage. The suitcase was put aboard an Air Malta flight that went to Frankfurt Airport in Germany. At Frankfurt, the suitcase was transferred to Pan Am Flight 103-A, which carried it to Heathrow Airport in London. At Heathrow, the suitcase containing the bomb was placed aboard Pan Am 103. It exploded about 38 minutes after the airliner departed for New York.

Pan Am 103 was at an altitude of six miles when the bomb detonated. Pieces of the jetliner were scattered over an area of 845 square miles. Scottish authorities immediately started conducting the most extensive crime scene investigation ever carried out. They searched the entire 845-square mile area inch-by-inch, month after month -- fields, forests, lakes, towns. And they found bits of evidence that proved to be critical to the investigators and forensic scientists in solving the case.

After laborious analysis and reconstruction, it was determined that the bomb had been in a suitcase in a large aluminum baggage container in the aircraft's forward cargo hold. It was found that the bomb was composed of 10 to 14 ounces of plastic explosive.

The methodical crime scene investigation yielded a tiny fragment, smaller than a fingernail, that had been driven by the blast into the large cargo container. Forensic experts determined that this was part of a circuit board of a Toshiba radio.

A fragment of a green circuit board -- also smaller than a fingernail -- was found in a piece of a shirt that had been in the suitcase containing the bomb. Scientists determined it was part of the bomb's timing device, and traced it to its manufacturer -- a Swiss company that had sold it to a high-level Libyan intelligence official.

The path of the deadly suitcase was reconstructed. With the help of many countries, investigators were then able to develop the remainder of the evidence leading to today's indictment.

This has been a case of incredible complexity. As you can see, it required a painstaking, long-term investigation of the utmost diligence and attention to the smallest detail.

Although this investigation is continuing and will be pursued unrelentingly until all responsible are brought to justice, today's indictment is a landmark and sends a powerful message. We have the resolve and the ability to track down -- no matter how long it takes -- those responsible for terrorist acts against Americans.