



[Outgoing Attorney General Bill Barr Unveils New Charges in the Lockerbie Bombing](#)

In one of his final acts as Attorney General, Bill Barr unveiled criminal charges against a former Libyan intelligence officer involved in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. The bombing killed 270 people, including 190 Americans, and is the second deadliest air attack in U.S. history. Abu Agila Mohammad Masud has been charged with terrorism-related crimes in relation to the bombing, in light of new evidence turned over to the FBI by Libyan authorities. Masud is accused of planting the bomb and setting a timer for it to explode while the plane was in flight. He allegedly admitted to his role in the attack while being interrogated by Libyan authorities following his arrest after the Qaddafi government was overthrown. Masud becomes the third individual charged in relation to the Pam Am flight, although the prior two suspects never faced justice due to the Libyan government under Muammar Qaddafi shielding them from extradition.

The filing of charges against Masud brings the case full circle for Attorney General Barr, whose first act during his initial stint as Attorney General under the George H.W. Bush Administration was to file charges against Masud's co-conspirators. Monday marked the 32nd anniversary of the attack, and Barr said in a statement that "no amount of time or distance will stop the United States from pursuing justice in this case." The FBI said it was first alerted to Masud's role in the bombing in 2017, when Libyan officials made contact to inform them that the former Qaddafi-era intelligence official had admitted to planting explosives in a suitcase that later brought down Pan Am Flight 103. Masud had been a person of interest in the investigation but his exact role remained murky because of uncertainty over his whereabouts and occupation. American intelligence officials believed that Masud had been personally thanked by Muammar Qaddafi for his role in the bombing, although the exact role he was referring to was unknown until recently.

After the government of Muammar Qaddafi was overthrown by popular street protests in Libya, many former regime officials were arrested, with Masud among them. He allegedly first confessed to playing a role in the bombing in 2012 while being interrogated about other crimes committed by Qaddafi's intelligence service. However, questions remain over the admissibility of this confession in court, as it could have been made under duress.

To this point, a United Nations report released in 2017 illustrated the mistreatment that Qaddafi-era officials were subjected to in various Libyan prisons after the regime fell. This will pose a significant problem for government prosecutors in any future case unless additional evidence is brought forward. Attorney General Barr said that while Masud was currently in the custody of the Libyan authorities, he didn't anticipate any difficulty in securing his extradition to the United States, meaning a future trial would be likely.