



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on July 16, 2010

Senators: BP Helped Free Terrorist for Profit

A group of American lawmakers is accusing embattled oil-giant BP of lobbying for the release of a Libyan terrorist convicted of murdering hundreds of people — all to gain a lucrative drilling contract from the socialist Libyan regime. The Senate Foreign Relations committee scheduled a hearing for July 29 to probe the matter, and lawmakers sent a letter to the U.S. State Department asking for an investigation.



BP has [admitted](#) to pushing for the prisoner-transfer agreement signed in 2007 between the United Kingdom and Libya. The deal helped free the only man convicted in the 1988 terrorist attack on a U.S. flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, that left 270 people dead, including almost 200 Americans.

"It is matter of public record that in late 2007 BP told the U.K. Government that we were concerned about the slow progress that was being made in concluding a prisoner transfer agreement with Libya," the company said in a statement. "We were aware that this could have a negative impact on U.K. commercial interests, including the ratification by the Libyan Government of BP's exploration agreement."

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The company signed a billion-dollar oil exploration deal with the Gaddafi regime the same month the prisoner agreement between the two governments was finalized. But BP denies any specific involvement in the release of the so-called Lockerbie bomber.

The Libyan intelligence officer, terrorist Abdel Baset al-Megrahi, was released from Scottish prison in August of last year on "compassionate" grounds. Doctors said they expected him to die from cancer within months. Yet he remains alive almost a year later, reportedly living a life of luxury in Libya and expected to survive for at least another decade.

The whole situation has some U.S. lawmakers fuming, or at least posturing. "The bottom line is simple," Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer of New York said at a press conference. "If it walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it just might be a corrupt deal between BP, the British government, and Libya."

Schumer and several other Democratic Senators, including Robert Menendez and Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey, are urging the State Department to investigate the matter while pressing BP to hold off drilling in Libya until the company's involvement can be probed further. In a letter to the State Department, U.S. lawmakers demanded a formal inquiry into the affair.

"The information that such an investigation would yield is important to fully determine the legitimacy of the decision to release this mass murderer and to fully understand the source of revenue streams for



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this corporation, which owes American taxpayers and coastal families billions of dollars," the letter stated.

The other U.S. Senator from New York, Kirsten Gillibrand, asked the British government to investigate as well. "We want a moratorium on the drilling off Libya's coast," she told NBC. "We believe BP should not be allowed to drill until we have resolution of this." But so far, BP has indicated that it plans to continue with the exploration planned to begin later this month.

Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is also up in arms. His committee will hold hearings into the matter later this month and is expected to call on BP officials to testify. "I opposed Megrahi's release on medical grounds last year as a travesty and the details that have emerged in recent days in the press have raised new concerns," Kerry said.

Even the British government [admitted](#) for the first time this week that releasing al-Megrahi was a mistake. But, it has denied that oil interests influenced the decision.

"The new British government is clear that Megrahi's release was a mistake," U.K. Ambassador to Washington Nigel Sheinwald said in a statement. "Claims in the press that Megrahi was released because of an oil deal involving BP, and that the medical evidence used by the Scottish executive supporting his release was paid for by the Libyan government, are not true." He also noted that the government "deeply regrets the continuing anguish" the terrorist's release has caused for the victims' families.

The situation is turning into another public relations nightmare for the energy giant, which is simultaneously dealing with fallout from the [massive oil spill](#) in the Gulf of Mexico. What any potential investigation into this most recent scandal may turn up and what effect it could have is still up in the air. BP is a big and powerful company, but at least for now, its immediate [future](#) isn't looking so bright.

Photo: Abdel Baset al-Megrahi, right, who was found guilty of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, meets with Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi, in Tripoli, Libya, on Aug. 21, 2009: AP Images



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