

Saudi Restores Libyan Spy Chief Moussa Koussa's Role as Global Shadow Broker

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Members of the Saudi special police unit perform during a parade in Mecca, on October 9, 2013, as more than two million Muslims have arrived in the holy city in the lead up to the annual hajj pilgrimage. (Photo: AFP -Fayez Nureldine)

Until two months ago, Saudi Arabia considered Moussa Koussa, the most prominent Libyan intelligence chief under Muammar Gaddafi, a major threat to its security. But it seems that Bandar bin Sultan's return as Saudi's spy chief helped reset Koussa's record and recruit him for his team.

Koussa, the former head of Libyan intelligence, is suddenly no longer the same dangerous man accused of planning terrorist attacks against Saudi Arabia, as he had been under Gaddafi. Thanks to Bandar bin Sultan's return, the book has been closed on Koussa's anti-Saudi past.

Koussa has now been classified as "friendly," as Bandar has enlisted Koussa's important skills for his open-ended security operations in many parts of the world, especially Syria.

Reports indicate that over the past two months Riyadh subjected Koussa to the traditional procedures that Saudi uses to re-establish relations with certain figures. Accordingly, Koussa was invited by Saudi intelligence to perform the *umra* in Mecca, and then the hajj as a guest of the royal court.

During the two visits, Koussa held long meetings with Bandar, focusing on turning the page on the past and restoring confidence. For decades Saudi Arabia accused Koussa of involvement in at least two major cases, including the well-publicized attempt to assassinate King Abdullah on the direct orders of Gaddafi, following a spat between the colonel and the king during the 2003 Arab League summit in Sharm al-Sheikh.

Although Koussa had been promoted from intelligence chief to Libya's foreign minister during that period, the Saudis still considered him the true authority of Gaddafi's spy services, deeming his promotion a ploy to give his spy work a diplomatic cover.

What is the nature of Koussa's new Saudi-dictated assignments? What kind of assignment would justify Saudi putting aside its past reservations about the Libyan strongman?

The second, unpublicized Saudi accusation against Koussa involves what Saudi intelligence says is an important role assigned to the Libyan official by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to implement a plan to partition Saudi Arabia into five smaller states.

From Doha to Riyadh

Sources familiar with Koussa's movements in the period that followed his defection from the Gaddafi regime following the Libyan uprising, say that the former intelligence chief had been based between Doha and London. In truth, it was the British government that is credited for taking Koussa's name off the international list of wanted Gaddafi regime figures.

Koussa soon forged close ties with former Qatari prime minister Hamad bin Jassim. Then, following Qatar's withdrawal from the forefront in the war to topple President Bashar al-Assad, Riyadh, at Bandar's initiative, opened a new chapter with Koussa, in return for his services on several issues considered vital by Saudi.

International Assignments

Questions arise: What is the nature of Koussa's new Saudi-dictated assignments? What kind of assignment would justify Saudi putting aside its past reservations about the Libyan strongman?

There is speculation, according to informed sources, regarding the kind of political thinking currently prevailing in Saudi Arabia. Most prominently, Bandar is thought to be of the opinion that Saudi, as it is undergoing an era of unprecedented crisis in its international relations, especially with the United States and Russia, might need to restore Koussa's role as an "international shadow broker," this time working on behalf of Saudi.

Indeed, as a result of rubbing shoulders with many in the international intelligence community, Bandar realizes that Koussa is well-qualified for this kind of assignment. For one thing, Koussa engineered more than once solutions for Gaddafi's problems with the West, concluding political deals on behalf of the Libyan dictator by finding security- and intelligence-related common grounds with his foes.

It seems that the head of Saudi intelligence intends to assign Gaddafi's top security man to put his international intelligence relations to use to conclude political-intelligence deals on behalf of Saudi Arabia.

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