

Tyrant's sons 'held by rebels': Celebrations in capital amid claims Gaddafi has run away 'like a coward'

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Three of Colonel Gaddafi's sons were last night reported to be in the hands of Libyan rebels as rumours spread that the tyrant himself had fled the capital.

There were reports that Gaddafi had fled to a bunker outside Tripoli, while the British representative of the rebels told Sky News he believed the dictator may even have gone to Algeria.

Independent Libyan television claimed the tyrant had 'run away like a coward', while the news channel Al-Jazeera reported the African Union may be offering Gaddafi exile in Angola or Zimbabwe.



Armed to the teeth and baying for Gaddafi's blood: Rebels head towards the gates of Tripoli yesterday. They claimed the dictator had reached 'zero hour' for his reign of terror



Thousands of people gathered in central Benghazi last night following the news from Tripoli



Celebration: A man on the roof of a building in Benghazi fires a flare into the air as other fireworks go off around him



Riding to victory: A group of Libyan rebels smile and make peace signs as they progress into Tripoli yesterday



Last stand: Gaddafi's son Saif Al-Islam in a televised address. Last night he was said to have been captured by rebel forces

The head of Libya's National Transitional Council, the rebels' governing body, said they had arrested Saif al-Islam and Al-Saadi, two of the tyrant's sons. A third, Muhammad, was reported to have handed himself in.

More...

- [Libyan rebels capture Tripoli and arrest dictator's son Saif: 'We'll give Gaddafi safe passage. . . if he steps down'](#)

Mustafa Abdel Jalil told Al-Jazeera: 'He (Saif) is being kept in a secure place under close guard until he is handed over to the judiciary.'

And he insisted Saif would not be harmed, telling French newspaper Le Monde: 'We gave instructions that he is well treated, in order to be judged.'



Jubilant: This group of Libyan civilians were on the streets of Maia celebrating the rebels advancement



Freedom: A young man carries the flag of the Libyan republic along the streets of Maia

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi once had a very close relationship with the West and was considered by many to represent a more democratic future for Libya. But since the uprising began he has become closely allied to his father. The International Criminal Court has a warrant out for his arrest on war crimes charges.

THE CRUCIAL MOMENTS IN THE BITTER STRUGGLE TO BRING FREEDOM TO LIBYA

JANUARY 14 Tunisian president Ben Ali ousted – the first victory in the Arab Spring which spread across North Africa.

FEBRUARY 11 Hosni Mubarak, the leader of Egypt, is forced to resign.

FEBRUARY 15 First protests begin in Libyan city of Benghazi against Gaddafi.

FEBRUARY 25 Following heavy fighting, most of Libya is held by the rebels, with only Tripoli, Sirte and Sabha in Gaddafi's hands.

MARCH 15 Fightback by Gaddafi forces sees them retake most of the rebel cities except Misrata and Benghazi.

MARCH 17 UN Security Council authorises a no-fly zone and 'all necessary measures' to enforce it.

MARCH 19 Action by Nato begins. RAF planes in action over Libya, and a British submarine fires Tomahawk missiles.

MARCH 30 Gaddafi's foreign minister Musa Kusa flees to UK and is 'no longer willing' to represent the dictator.

APRIL 14 David Cameron, Barack Obama and Nicolas Sarkozy say Gaddafi must 'go and go for good'.

APRIL 19 British Army officers sent to advise rebels.

MAY 28 RAF jets and other Nato forces strike a command and control centre where Gaddafi sometimes lives.

JUNE 27 International arrest warrant is issued for Gaddafi.

JULY 27 Britain formally recognises the opposition National Transitional Council.

JULY 28 Rebel commander General Abdel Fattah Younes shot dead amid rumours of infighting.

AUGUST 15 Rebels make key advances as fierce fighting is reported in Zawiya, 30 miles west of Tripoli, and Gharyan, 50 miles to the south.

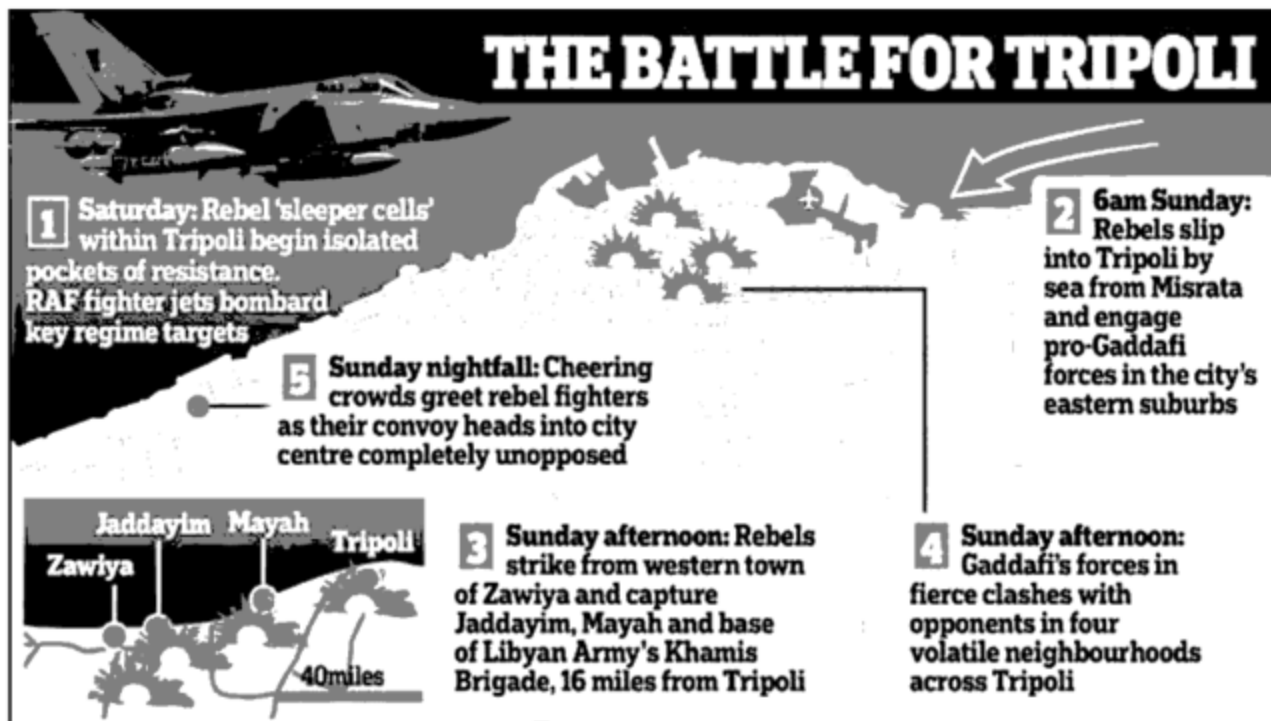
AUGUST 20 First rebel attacks in Tripoli.

AUGUST 21 Rebel troops pour into Tripoli as two of Gaddafi's sons are arrested and another surrenders.

Gaddafi's oldest son, Muhammad, ran the company which operated all mobile phones and satellites in the country, as well as being head of the Libyan Olympic Committee.

Al-Saadi, took a far more hands-on role in his father's regime, as commander of Libya's Special Forces. He has been accused of ordering the army to fire on unarmed protesters in Benghazi at the start of the uprising.

As wild celebrations erupted across Libya to mark Gaddafi's apparent departure, there were reports that the dictator, who has been in power for 42 murderous years, was actually moving around a series of bomb-proof bunkers and tunnels beneath the capital.



The battle for Tripoli



Compound: Two men survey damage at the Gaddafi residence in Tripoli following an air strike. There are reports the home has secret tunnels the tyrant may use to escape

And even as he was supposed to have taken refuge within the complex – which is reputed to be able to withstand a nuclear attack – the dictator broadcast a message as his troops prepared to mount a last stand.

Gaddafi's official spokesman had previously lashed out against Britain, France and the U.S. – the three countries leading the campaign to oust the dictator – as he warned of a 'ghastly disaster' if rebel forces took Tripoli. Earlier in the day, sources inside the embattled city said pro-Gaddafi forces had put snipers on the rooftops of buildings around Bab al-Aziziyah, Gaddafi's secret compound, and on the top of a nearby water tower.

His bunker complex is the stuff of Libyan folklore. Tunnels are said to connect vast, cavernous rooms capable of housing tanks, aircraft and weapons. He also has sleeping quarters in different parts of the complex. An insight into his desire to seek refuge underground emerged when rebel forces seized control of Benghazi, the country's second city, in March.

They discovered a series of tunnels and rooms built more than 100 yards below the earth.

But the Tripoli complex is far grander, and some defectors claim there are even tunnels running for hundreds of miles from Gaddafi's bunker to the south of the country – a possible escape route.

At the start of the uprising, Gaddafi ordered a children's playground to be built around the secret entrances to the bunker, hoping this would deter targeted NATO airstrikes.

And NATO sources warned the shifting battle lines and the movement of the fighting into built-up areas in Tripoli had made it more difficult to engage airstrikes without endangering civilians.
