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www.afgazad.com

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The telegraph

Libya: Former Guantánamo detainee is training rebels

A former detainee at Guantánamo Bay has taken a leading role in the military opposition to Col Muammar Gaddafi, it has emerged, alongside at least one other former Afghan Mujahideen fighter.

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Rebel recruits in the eastern port city of Derna are being trained by Sufyan Bin Qumu, a [Libyan](#) who was arrested following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, and held at Guantánamo for six years.

Abdel Hakim al-Hasidi, a senior Libyan rebel commander in Derna, was also held following the invasion of Afghanistan and handed over to Libyan custody two months later.

Both men were said to have been released from prison in Libya in 2008 as part of a reconciliation process with Islamists in the country.

Mr Qumu, 51, a Libyan army veteran, was accused by the US government of working as a truck driver for a company owned by Osama bin Laden, and as an accountant for a charity accused of terrorist links.

The appearance of Islamists in the country's revolution, and supportive statements by Islamist groups, has led to fears that Western military action may be playing into the hands of its ideological enemies.

Last week Admiral James Stavridis, Nato's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, said that, while the Libyan opposition's leadership appeared to be "responsible men and women," US intelligence had detected "flickers" of terrorist activity among rebel groups. The comments were described by British government sources as "very alarming."

However, Islamists are said to form only a small minority within the rebel forces, and there is not said to have been any disagreement with the opposition's political leadership, which says it is secular.

Mr Hasidi, who spent several years in a training camp in Afghanistan, told a newspaper he does not support a Taliban-like state and is pursuing an "inclusive ideology". He said: "Our view is starting to change of the US. If we hated the Americans 100 per cent, today it is less than 50 per cent. They have started to redeem themselves for their past mistakes by helping us to preserve the blood of our children."

He has also called on foreign governments to supply rebels in Libya with Stinger surface-to-air missiles.

Mr Qumu has described the Nato-led bombing in Libya as a "blessing".

Diplomatic cables from 2008 obtained by WikiLeaks, and initially revealed by *The Daily Telegraph*, identified Derna as a breeding ground for fighters for a number of causes, including Afghanistan and Iraq.

The cables quoted a local businessman saying: "The unemployed, disfranchised young men of eastern Libya have nothing to lose and are therefore willing to sacrifice themselves for something greater than themselves by engaging in extremism in the name of religion."

However, Mr Hasidi has denied suggestions of extremism in Derna. He told Al-Jazeera: "Gaddafi is trying to divide the people of the nation. He claims that there is an Islamist Emirate in Derna and that I am its Emir. He is taking advantage from the fact that I am a former political prisoner."