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Al Jazeera

## Scepticism surrounds 'Gaddafi son's death'

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Residents in the rebel stronghold of Benghazi have taken to the streets to celebrate Libyan government's announcement of the death of Muammar Gaddafi's youngest son in an air strike, but growing scepticism remains over the veracity of the news.

Gaddafi and his wife were in the Tripoli house of his 29-year-old son, Saif al-Arab Gaddafi, when it was hit by at least one missile fired by a NATO warplane late on Saturday, Libyan government spokesman Moussa Ibrahim said Sunday.

Al-Arab's compound in Tripoli's Garghour neighbourhood was attacked "with full power" in a "direct operation to assassinate the leader of this country," Ibrahim said, calling the strike a violation of international law.

"What we have now is the law of the jungle," he told a news conference. "We think now it is clear to everyone that what is happening in Libya has nothing to do with the protection of civilians."

Ibrahim had earlier taken journalists to the remnants of a house in Tripoli, which Libyan officials said had been hit by at least three missiles. Given the level of destruction, it is unclear that anyone could have survived.

### No NATO confirmation

Three loud explosions were heard in Tripoli on Saturday evening as jets flew overhead. Volleys of anti-aircraft fire rang out following the first two strikes, which were followed by a third.

NATO continued strikes against military installations in the Libyan capital, including one on a known command and control building in Bab al-Aziziya neighbourhood, but could not confirm the deaths of some of Gaddafi family members, Carmen Romero, the deputy NATO spokeswoman in Brussels, told Al Jazeera by phone.

NATO targets do not include individuals as they are military in nature and clearly linked to regime's systematic attacks on Libyans, Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard, commander of NATO's Operation Unified Protector, said earlier Sunday in a statement.

"This was a military target and we cannot confirm who was there," Romero emphasised, denying questions over the target site being a family home.

UK Prime Minister David Cameron echoed NATO's stance on the western coalition forces' targeting policy, and refused to comment on an "unconfirmed report".

### **Report questioned**

Rifle fire and car horns rang out in Benghazi as news of the attack spread. Cars whizzed by the sea front beeping their horns and shouting "God is greatest" as the night sky was lit up by red tracer fire.

But rebels there who control a vast swathe of the east of the country, say they cannot trust Gaddafi.

Al Jazeera's Sue Turton, reporting from Benghazi, said there were "an awful lot" of suggestions in Libya that the news of the deaths could be fabricated.

"One of the main spokesmen for the Transitional National Council, Abdul Hafez Goga, is saying he thinks it could all be fabrication, that it may well be Gaddafi is trying to garner some sympathy," she said.

"Back in 1986, Gaddafi once claimed that Ronald Reagan, then US president, had launched a strike on his compound in Tripoli and killed his daughter. Many journalists since then dug around and found out that the actual child that had died had nothing to do with Gaddafi, that he sort of adopted her posthumously."

Saif al-Arab Gaddafi is the most unknown of the Libyan leader's children, Al Jazeera's Anita McNaught, reporting from Tunisia, said.

"He's one of the low-profile of his children and has been largely invisible since the conflict began", she said.

"He hasn't been visible in any significant form. He hasn't appeared on TV or made any speeches, he hasn't been on any crowd-rallying marches."