

Gaddafi heir who (inevitably) is a friend of Andy and Mandy

By [Keith Dovkants](#)

Last updated at 12:27 PM on 22nd February 2011

Colonel Gaddafi's son Saif wagged his finger repeatedly at the cameras during his rambling state address on Libyan television on Sunday night. It was a habit borne of the belief that he would one day take over from his tyrannical father to continue Libya's brutally repressive rule.

But there was no doubting the desperation in his voice as he warned that 'rivers of blood' would run through the country and it would be plunged into civil war unless the uprising was crushed.

He blamed drug addicts, drunks and foreign agents for fomenting the violence now coursing through the land where he and his family once had an iron grip. There was no hint of contrition. Not once did he apologise for the countless deaths inflicted by the soldiers and henchman of his father's bloody regime.



No pussycat: Colonel Gaddafi's son Saif, long seen as the dictator's most likely heir, keeps pet tigers at his Tripoli villa



'Rivers of blood': Saif warned opponents of violent retribution earlier this week

And yet, with his impeccable English and flawless manners, 38-year-old Saif Gaddafi has long been regarded as the acceptable face of the Gaddafi clan.

What is so deeply worrying is that he has tentacles deep in the heart of the British establishment. He has extremely powerful friends in Britain, among them Prince Andrew and the Rothschilds as well as Peter Mandelson.

In the boardrooms and cabinets of Western capitals Saif was always the preferred choice as heir. Colonel Gaddafi has seven sons, but the second, Saif al-Islam (it means Sword of Islam) was always generally considered the most likely to follow his father – although another brother, Mutassim, Libya's national security adviser, recently emerged as a serious contender.

Despite his incoherent statement in support of an authoritarian crackdown on Sunday night, Saif has in the past spoken enthusiastically about reform, democracy and human rights. He was educated in Europe and did a PhD at the London School of Economics, for which he has a particular affection and regard.





Powerful friends: Saif is said to have relations with Prince Andrew, left, and Peter Mandelson, right

He is an accomplished amateur artist and an architect with his own practice, although his wealth is said to come from interests linked back to Libya's national oil company. Certainly, he is rich. By way of diversion, Saif likes to romp with his pet tigers.

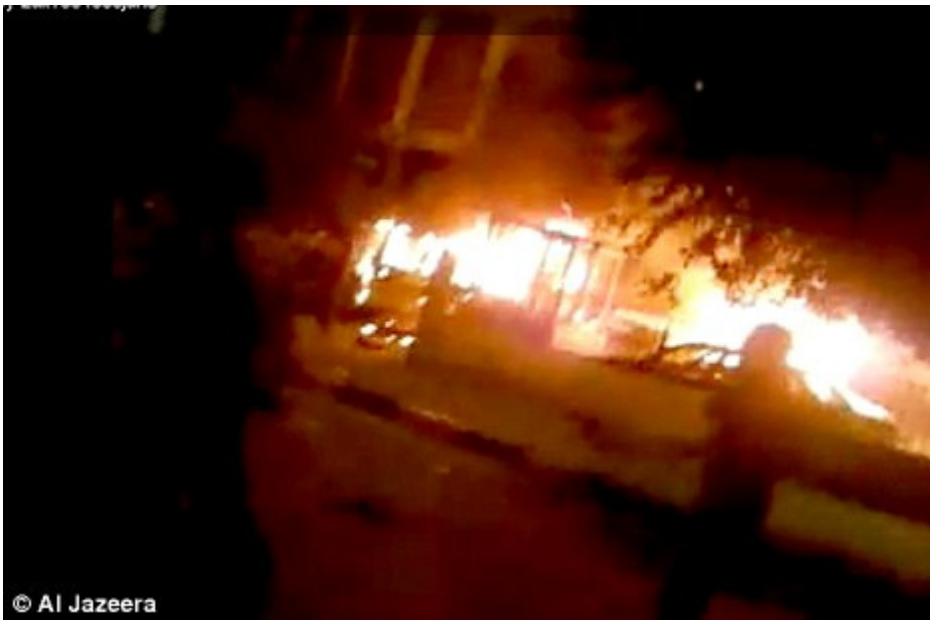
He keeps them at his villa on a hillside overlooking Tripoli, along with his hunting falcons, sporting guns and other trappings essential to the life of a desert princeling.

Saif often emerges from his encounters with the big cats bloodied and bruised, yet cheerfully game for a re-match. It may help to explain why, in his campaign to release Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset Al Megrahi, he found Labour ministers were mere pussycats.

Saif has a house close to Bishop's Avenue, the so-called Millionaire's Row, in Hampstead, north London. The Georgian style, newly-built property has eight bedrooms, an indoor pool, sauna and a cinema lined in suede-covered panelling. It cost him £10million. In Britain, Saif moves in exclusive circles. He and Prince Andrew have a mutual close friend, the Kazakh-born socialite and businesswoman Goga Ashkenazy.

She recently helped arrange Saif's visit to Kazakhstan where he met the president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and senior figures in the energy industry.

Prince Andrew has made a number of visits to Libya as Britain's ambassador for trade and has spent time with Saif in Tripoli. In return, the prince has hosted Saif at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle.



Crumbling: Government buildings in Tripoli were ablaze last night amid clashes between security forces and protesters

Witness, too, the shooting party given in 2009 by Jacob, 4th Baron Rothschild at his home in Buckinghamshire, Waddesdon Manor, a Renaissance-style chateau sometimes described as 'a mini Versailles'. Saif was a guest, with Lord Mandelson, then Business Secretary. Cherie Blair, whose acquisition of a country house nearby makes her the Rothschilds' neighbour, was there the same weekend for dinner, but not at the same time as Saif.

Mandelson and Saif got along famously and the subject of Al Megrahi, who was still in jail, was raised. Mandelson insists there was no negotiation. Also at Waddesdon Manor was Nat Rothschild, Lord Rothschild's son. Nat and Saif are great pals. They also have a friend in common, Oleg Deripaska, the controversial Russian oligarch who was the last man standing after the bloody war for control of Russia's aluminium industry in the 1990s.

Deripaska, it will be recalled, was part of the infamous summer gathering at the Rothschild house on Corfu in 2008 when Mandelson and George Osborne, then chancellor-in-waiting, were guests. Saif has also stayed with the Rothschilds on Corfu and, on a separate occasion, met Mandelson there.



Crumbling: protesters in Libya's second city Benghazi, where they are said to have overwhelmed Gaddafi's supporters

The August 2008 affair led to Osborne denying he had asked Deripaska for a donation to the Tory party and denials by Mandelson that he had favoured the Russian's aluminium interests when he was a European commissioner. It was all very messy.

Deripaska has a valuable interest in Porto Montenegro, a vast marina and superyacht project in the Bay of Kotor on the Adriatic. The driving force behind the scheme is Peter Munk, the 83-year-old billionaire head of the world's biggest goldmining concern, Barrick Gold.

Jacob and Nat Rothschild are also investors in the Montenegro venture which, Munk says, will become the new Monaco. When Saif threw a huge party to celebrate his 37th birthday he held it close to his friends' Montenegro development, inviting some of the world's leading business figures, including Munk, a few very powerful Russians and Lakshmi Mittal, the British-based steel tycoon.

The party was seen as an effort to give a boost to the profile of his friends' marina project. His closeness to Nat Rothschild and Deripaska is also believed to be behind Libya's decision to invest heavily in Deripaska's aluminium concern, Rusal.

The Libyan Investment Authority took a \$300million (£185million) stake in Rusal when it was floated in Hong Kong last year.

The Rothschilds were Deripaska's advisers and separately Nat invested \$100million (£62million) in the company, the world's largest producer of aluminium. Saif was also involved in an ongoing plan for Rusal to produce aluminium on a major scale inside Libya.

Aluminium, however, will be the last thing on Saif's mind tonight as Tripoli goes up in flames. As for his friends and business partners in the West, they may well be regretting getting quite so close to the dictator's son whose television address on Sunday night showed him at last in his true colours.

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[Nat Rothschild](#),
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Places:

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