

SEPTEMBER 2011

ANTHONY BELL & DAVID WITTER

# THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION

## ESCALATION & INTERVENTION

PART 2



*Photo Credit: March 21, 2011 - A French navy AS365 F Dauphin rescue helicopter from French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle (R91) test lands aboard the amphibious command ship USS Mount Whitney (LCC/JCC 20). (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Gary Keen/Released)*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION | PART 2- ESCALATION & INTERVENTION | ANTHONY BELL & DAVID WITTER | SEPTEMBER 2011

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This report is the second installment of a four-part series on the revolution in Libya. *Part Two: Escalation and Intervention* details the international reaction to the war and the process that led to the U.S. and allied military intervention in March 2011. The paper begins with the initial international reaction to the uprising in Libya in the early spring of 2011 and the international debate over a no-fly zone. This section documents efforts by the United States and its European allies to garner broader support for intervention in Libya, especially from Arab states. During this time, France, Great Britain, and the United States led international efforts to intervene in Libya. The third part of the paper explains the efforts to implement a no-fly zone under the U.S.-led Operation Odyssey Dawn in March 2011. This report concludes with a discussion of the NATO-led Operation Unified Protector and emerging tensions amongst NATO allies over the way forward in Libya.

## THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY REACTS

- The international intervention in Libya led by the United States, Britain and France that began on March 19, 2011 dramatically altered the course of the Libyan revolution.
- Anti-regime protests surged across the Middle East and North Africa after the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia in late January and early February. The astonishing speed at which Libya had descended into conflict was matched only by the speed the United States and its allies became involved in it.
- In a matter of four weeks, from February 17 to March 19, the United States and Europe reversed a decade of efforts aimed at normalizing political, commercial, and military ties with Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi and launched a military campaign against him.
- The international community was quick to condemn Qaddafi's security forces' use of violence shortly after major demonstrations started on February 17. President Barack Obama condemned the violence against the protesters on February 18. British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy made similar calls for restraint and immediately suspended their countries' military exports to Libya.
- In France, Sarkozy appeared eager from the start of the rebellion to demonstrate his foreign policy leadership and he became an early champion of the rebels and of military intervention.
- As the fighting escalated, leaders in the United States, Britain, France, and elsewhere began coming under domestic political pressure to cut their ties to Qaddafi and take measures to punish his regime and support the protesters.
- Obama took his first concrete action against Qaddafi less than an hour after the last American citizens had safely departed Tripoli on February 25, signing an executive order imposing targeted financial sanctions on Qaddafi and regime figures and freezing certain Libyan funds. Obama also cancelled all military contacts with Libya and ordered U.S. intelligence agencies to shift assets towards the spiraling violence and to begin monitoring loyalist troop and armor movements.
- Frequent discussions soon began between Obama, Cameron, Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan in an attempt to coordinate their policies towards Libya.
- With support from the United States and Germany, Britain and France introduced a resolution in the UN Security Council pushing for multilateral sanctions against Qaddafi. Russia and China signaled they were willing to back limited sanctions against Qaddafi.
- The few obstructions led to a rapid and unanimous adoption of Resolution 1970 (UNSCR 1970) on February 26.

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## THE NO-FLY ZONE DEBATE

- The debate to take military action against Qaddafi intensified following the passage of UNSCR 1970. Over the next month, the rebel's position on the ground deteriorated as Qaddafi launched offensives against the rebels at Zawiyah, Misrata, and Cyrenaica (see Part I of this series).
- Britain and France led the charge for military action against Qaddafi, joined somewhat reluctantly, by the United States. Domestic politics strongly influenced leaders' willingness or lack of enthusiasm to take action, and political obstacles would later tangle the participation of the United States and several other countries.
- A heated debate was emerging within the Obama administration over whether to use military force in Libya.
  - Within the administration, the advocates for a strong U.S. response, including the possibility of military force, included Clinton, Vice President Joseph Biden, UN Ambassador Susan Rice, and Samantha Power, Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights on the NSC.
  - The skeptics of using military force included Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon, and Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan.
  - While advocates in the Obama administration pondered taking action, skeptics, including military officers, defense and intelligence officials, lawmakers, diplomats, and others were skeptical of the effectiveness of a no-fly zone to end the violence, and they cautioned about the hard military realities and level of commitment it would entail.
- The United States and European allies had predicated any military intervention on the basis of having international and regional support. The first sign of regional support came from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a regional alliance made up of the six Gulf monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.
  - After a meeting of GCC ministers in Abu Dubai on March 7, leaders of the Gulf States announced their unanimous support for UNSCR 1970 and demanded the Security Council take all necessary measures to protect Libyan civilians, including the creation of a no-fly zone over Libya.
  - The GCC pushed the Arab League to take responsibility for the Arab response to the fighting in Libya and requested an emergency meeting of the body held on March 12.
  - During the meeting, the League expressed its intent to communicate with the National Transitional Council and requested that the UN Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya and establish safe havens for civilians. Support for the no-fly zone was hardly unanimous but the strongest support for the measure came from the six members of the GCC.
- By March 15, the U.S. position on military action in Libya remained unsettled, but time was running short to intervene. Loyalist forces were driving the rebels back towards Benghazi, and if Qaddafi reclaimed the city, there would hardly be an opposition for the United States and Europe to throw their support behind.
  - The GCC pushed the Arab League to take responsibility for the Arab response to the fighting in Libya and requested an emergency meeting of the body held on March 12.

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- Obama met on March 15 with his senior national security advisors, including Gates, Clinton, Rice, Donilon, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough, and NSC adviser Ben Rhodes, to decide the U.S. course of action.
  - After deliberating, a consensus emerged that a no-fly zone was insufficient to stop Qaddafi but that political and diplomatic avenues were exhausted.
  - Obama instructed Rice to pursue a more muscular UN resolution that would authorize “all necessary measures” to protect Libyan civilians at the Security Council, broad diplomatic language that permitted a bombing campaign against Qaddafi’s ground forces in addition to the no-fly zone.
- After extensive diplomatic efforts to avert a Russian veto of the resolution, Russia decided to abstain from the vote along with China.
- On March 17, the UN Security Council voted to authorize Resolution 1973 (UNSCR 1973).
  - It granted member states, acting independently or through regional organizations or arrangements, the authority to use “all necessary measures” to protect Libyan civilians under threat of attack from Libyan military forces.
  - UNSCR 1973 also allowed the imposition of a no-fly zone, a strict arms embargo, freezing of the regime’s assets, and a travel ban on Libyan officials, but it prohibited ground forces from occupying Libyan territory.
- Following the UN resolution, a Paris Summit was convened on March 19 to craft the coalition’s political and military agenda. Participants included leaders and senior diplomats from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Canada, Norway, Qatar, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates, along with representatives from the UN, the European Union, and the Arab League.
- At the conclusion of the summit, the participants made a joint declaration to enforce UNSCR 1973 with all necessary actions, including military force. That day, the United States and its allies launched Operation Odyssey Dawn.

## **OPERATION ODYSSEY DAWN (MARCH 19 TO MARCH 31, 2011)**

- The United States began Operation Odyssey Dawn on March 19 several hours after France opened the campaign with airstrikes against loyalist troops outside of Benghazi.
- The opening waves of U.S. attacks were designed to cripple Qaddafi’s air defenses and air force, which would pave the way for manned-flights over Libya to enforce the no-fly zone and strike Qaddafi’s ground forces.
- The United States took the lead role in the international coalition. General Carter F. Ham, the head of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) led the operation from AFRICOM’s headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany.
- After a no-fly zone was established over Cyrenaica and gradually expanded over the rest of the country, U.S. and coalition combat aircraft began conducting airstrikes on loyalist ground forces on the eastern front.



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## NATO'S OPERATION UNIFIED PROTECTOR

- As the fight in Libya continued on the ground and in the air, the administration moved to swiftly transition command to NATO in order to minimize the U.S. role and allow Britain and France to take the lead. Shortly after the airstrikes commenced, Obama, Sarkozy, and Cameron reached a tentative agreement that NATO would take over the operation.
- Political obstacles surfaced within NATO, as many in the alliance were reluctant to shoulder the mission. While NATO members came to an agreement on March 22 that the alliance would take command of the maritime arms embargo, this did not include the no-fly zone mission. On March 23, NATO began Operation Unified Protector with a mandate limited to enforcing an arms embargo on Libya.
- The holdups in the transition from U.S. to NATO command led to a flurry of negotiations and eventually, the military campaign was placed under NATO command. A separate coordinating group was created for the coalition at large to orchestrate their policies towards supporting the rebels and dealing with Qaddafi, which was created as the Libyan Contact Group on March 29.
- Operation Unified Protector began in earnest on March 31 after NATO assumed command of all coalition military actions in Libya from the United States, with the transition fully completed by April 4.
- The United States, despite withholding its combat aircraft, continued to play a key role in Operation Unified Protector by providing approximately forty aircraft.
  - U.S. participation was largely limited to a support role, providing electronic warfare, aerial refueling, search and rescue, and other logistical capabilities. U.S. warplanes continued to conduct occasional airstrikes to suppress regime air defenses as part of the no-fly zone, conducting about sixty strikes between April and June.
- While the international intervention in Libya succeeded in preventing the rebels from falling to Qaddafi's forces in the spring of 2011, it by no means brought about a quick end to the conflict. The conflict continued for months as fighting in Cyrenaica stalemated and the rebel-held enclave of Misrata in western Libya faced a weeks-long siege by Qaddafi's forces. The alliance continued to be plagued by internal divisions that heightened as the conflict dragged on into the late summer and the outcome of the intervention remained uncertain.

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# GLOSSARY

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**Abdel Fattah Younis:** A former member of the Qaddafi regime, Abdel Fattah Younis served as Qaddafi's interior minister before his defection on February 22, 2011. Younis served as the chief rebel military commander until his assassination by an unknown rebel brigade on July 28, 2011.

**Ajdabiya:** The town of Ajdabiya is located 95 miles southwest of Benghazi. Ajdabiya is a vital crossroads for Cyrenaica. Highways extend north to Benghazi, east to the port city of Tobruk, and southeast through oil-producing regions to the Kufra Oases. Ajdabiya was contested by rebels and loyalist fighters in mid-March, until NATO air support allowed rebels to retake the town on March 26, 2011.

**Benghazi:** Benghazi, the largest city in the Cyrenaica region, served as the center of power for the Sanusi Monarch prior to Qaddafi's 1969 coup. Demonstrations against the Qaddafi regime began in Benghazi on February 15. Security forces began to use lethal force against the protests on February 17, 2011, and rebels successfully seized the city on February 20, 2011. The National Transitional Council officially convened for the first time in Benghazi on March 5, 2011 and the city served as the NTC's capital throughout the rebellion.

**Brega:** Located 115 miles southwest of Benghazi, the town of Brega contains an oil, natural gas, and petrochemical refinery. Brega is Libya's fifth largest refinery and provides natural gas to Benghazi and Tripoli. Qaddafi forces retook Brega from rebel fighters on March 15, 2011, and rebel forces were unable to dislodge the loyalist defenders from the town until the loyalists withdrew on August 17, 2011.

**Cyrenaica:** Cyrenaica is one of the three distinct regions in Libya. Comprising the eastern half of the country, Cyrenaica and its capital city of Benghazi served as the seat of power for King Idris I under the Sanusi Monarchy. Due to the historical rivalry with the western region of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica was long a cradle of anti-Qaddafi sentiment and was the first area to rise up against Qaddafi.

**Fezzan:** Fezzan is the southwest region of Libya. Owing to its remoteness and sparse population, Fezzan has not featured prominently into the rivalry between Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Its largest city, Sabha, serves as the region's administrative center. Fezzan is dominated by the Maqarha tribe, one of Libya's largest tribes which staunchly supported Qaddafi.

**Khamis Qaddafi and the Khamis Brigade:** Khamis Qaddafi is one of the younger sons of Muammar Qaddafi and the commander of the elite 32nd Brigade (also known as the Khamis Brigade). The brigade was the primary paramilitary force deployed against the rebels in western Libya. Rebels have reported Khamis's death on several occasions, mostly recently stating he was killed in battle on August 29, 2011.

**Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG):** The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group is an extremist Islamic terrorist group formed in opposition to Qaddafi's regime in 1995. The LIFG was violently suppressed by the Qaddafi regime. The U.S. government designated the group as a terrorist organization in 2004 for its links with al-Qaeda. The LIFG became defunct by the end of the 1990s, though former LIFG fighters declared their support for the National Transitional Council. Abdul Hakim Belhaj, the leader of the Tripoli military council, was the overall commander of the LIFG.

**Mahmood Jibril:** Mahmood Jibril served as a senior economic advisor in the Qaddafi regime until his resignation in 2010. Jibril became the Chairman of the National Transitional Council's Executive Board on March 23, 2011 and was appointed the Prime Minister of the NTC. He has been the Council's main envoy to the international community.

**Misrata:** The port city of Misrata is located 125 miles southeast of Tripoli along the Mediterranean coast. It is Libya's third-largest city with 200,000 residents. Misrata joined the uprising on February 17, 2011. Loyalist forces besieged Misrata from early March to mid-May. The battle was marked by heavy urban combat and thousands of casualties. After the siege was lifted, Misratan rebels began advancing towards Tripoli in early August.

**Muammar Qaddafi:** Colonel Muammar Qaddafi seized control of Libya in a military coup on September 1, 1969. Qaddafi crafted the "Third Universal Theory," which combined elements of socialism, democracy, pan-Arabism, and Islam into an ideology outlined in his 1975 *Green Book*. Qaddafi dispatched paramilitary forces to quell the protests in February 2011; many soldiers and a number of government officials defected soon after, as the conflict escalated.

**Mustafa Abdul Jalil:** Mustafa Abdel Jalil served as Qaddafi's Minister of Justice from 2007 until his resignation on February 21, 2011. Jalil was a founding member of the National Transitional Council and was named chairman of the Council on February 26, 2011. Known for his reformist efforts while serving in the regime, Jalil secured significant domestic and international support as the leader of the NTC.

**Mutassim Qaddafi:** Mutassim is the fourth son of Muammar Qaddafi and served as his father's National Security Advisor since 2009. He and his older brother Saif al-Islam have long been considered the two most likely sons to replace their father, resulting in a heated rivalry between them. During the rebellion, Mutassim reportedly commanded the 9th Brigade, a paramilitary unit from Sirte that was heavily engaged against the rebels on the eastern front at Brega.

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# GLOSSARY

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**Nafusa Mountains:** The Nafusa Mountains is a highlands area that stretches from the town of Gharyan to the Tunisian border. The Nafusa Mountains are an intricate patchwork of small Arab and Berber tribes. The Berber population has traditionally been at odds with the Qaddafi regime. Many towns in the Nafusa joined the uprising in February and fought off loyalist attacks during the subsequent months. The Nafusa Mountain rebels coordinated an offensive against Tripoli with NATO in August and seized the capital.

**National Transitional Council (NTC):** The National Transitional Council is the official political body that represents the Libyan rebel movement. The NTC was established in Benghazi on February 27, 2011 and the NTC Executive Board was created on March 23, 2011. Based out of Benghazi, the NTC began gradually relocating to Tripoli after the fall of the capital city. Many of the Council's leaders are former Qaddafi regime officials, Libyan exiles, and eastern Libya politicians.

**Operation Odyssey Dawn:** Operation Odyssey Dawn was the name of the U.S. military operation conducted in Libya from March 19 to March 31, 2011 to enforce UNSCR 1973. It was a joint air and sea operation to enforce a no-fly zone, maritime arms embargo and protect civilians on the ground by bombing regime forces. After March 31, the United States stepped down from its leadership role and contributed military assets to the NATO-led Operation Unified Protector.

**Operation Unified Protector:** Operation Unified Protector is the name of the NATO-led mission to enforce UNSCR 1973 began on March 23, 2011 when the alliance took responsibility for enforcing an arms embargo on Libya of the arms embargo. On March 31, 2011, NATO took full responsibility for the air campaign over Libya.

**Ras Lanuf:** The coastal town or Ras Lanuf is situated 126 miles southeast of Sirte and contains Libya's largest oil refinery. Rebel forces seized Ras Lanuf in early March, though a loyalist counterattack drove the rebels from the town on March 11, 2011. Following the rebel assault on Brega, rebel fighters attacked and captured Ras Lanuf on August 23, 2011.

**Saif al-Islam Qaddafi:** The second son of Muammar Qaddafi, Saif al-Islam was the heir apparent to his father. Prior to the rebellion, Saif spearheaded political and economic initiatives and was regarded as a reformer. Throughout the conflict, Saif was the most visible member of the Qaddafi family. While he initially tried to appease protesters with promises of reform, he publicly defended the regime's brutal crackdown on demonstrators as the conflict escalated. He evaded capture by rebel forces following the fall of Tripoli.

**Sirte:** The city of Sirte is located in central Libya and straddles the boundary between Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Sirte is the hometown of Muammar Qaddafi and a stronghold of the Qadadfa tribe. During Qaddafi's rule, he developed Sirte into a major administrative center and military garrison. The city's heavily defended garrison has remained loyal to Qaddafi throughout the war. As of September 2011, loyalists troops continued to holdout in Sirte.

**Tripoli:** The capital of Libya, Tripoli is located on the western coastline and is the country's largest city with 1.8 million residents. Initial protests in the capital were suppressed by mid-March. The seat of power for the Qaddafi regime, NATO aircraft bombed Tripoli more frequently than anywhere else during the war. The Nafusa Mountain rebels began advancing towards Tripoli in early August in coordination with others inside the city. Qaddafi's compound was captured by the rebels on August 24, 2011, and rebel commanders reported the city was secure on August 28, 2011.

**Tripolitania:** Tripolitania is the northwest region of Libya. It is the most populated region of Libya, with the capital city of Tripoli and major cities such as Misrata and Zawiyah. that includes the capital city of Tripoli. The region has an historic rivalry with Cyrenaica in the east.

**United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1970:** The UN Security Council passed UNSCR 1970 on February 26, 2011. It established an arms embargo, imposed a travel ban on regime officials, and compelled member states to freeze the financial assets of six regime figures and members of the Qaddafi family. It also granted the International Criminal Court jurisdiction over all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Libya after February 15, 2011.

**UNSCR 1973:** The UN Security Council authorized UNSCR 1973 on March 17, 2011. It granted member states the authority to use "all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians threatened by Libyan military forces and enforce a no-fly zone and arms embargo on Libya.

**Zawiyah:** The city of Zawiyah is located 30 miles west of Tripoli and contains Libya's second largest oil refinery. Anti-Qaddafi forces drove loyalist troops from the city on February 20, 2011, though regime forces retook Zawiyah on March 11, 2011. Many of Zawiyah fighters subsequently fled and joined the rebellion in the Nafusa Mountains to the south. The rebels attacked Zawiyah in an offensive coordinated with NATO on August 13, 2011, finally recapturing the city on August 20, 2011 and securing a route to Tripoli.

**Zintan:** Located 85 miles southwest of Tripoli, the town of Zintan is the largest city in the Nafusa Mountains. Zintan joined the uprising in mid-February, and rebel forces repulsed loyalist attacks from February through May. NATO airstrikes enabled the Zintan rebels to break through loyalist lines on June 2, and rebel fighters seized numerous towns in the Nafusa Mountains in the following weeks.



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# THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION

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## ESCALATION & INTERVENTION

### PART 2

By Anthony Bell & David Witter

*This four-part series provides a detailed narrative of the war in Libya and seeks to explain the underlying dynamics behind the conflict for policymakers contemplating policies regarding Libya's future. Part One: Roots of Rebellion details Libya's political history, human terrain, economy, and the Qaddafi regime's unique political and military structures. It also addresses the early stages of the conflict in February 2011, beginning with the protests in Benghazi that triggered the rebellion, and the formation of the National Transitional Council. The paper also details the spread of unrest to western Libya and the regime's crackdowns in Tripoli and Zawiyah. Part Two: Escalation and Intervention discusses the international reaction to the war and the process that led to the U.S. and allied military intervention in March. This section explains the U.S.-led Operation Odyssey Dawn and the NATO-led Operation Unified Protector. Part Three: Stalemate and Siege documents the ebb of fighting in eastern Libya, the pinnacle battle of Misrata, and the turmoil within the rebel ranks. This section concludes with the extensive efforts to break the siege of Misrata. Part Four: The Tide Turns documents the fighting in the Nafusa Mountains of western Libya that culminated in the rebel seizure of Tripoli in August. This final installment in the series concludes with discussion of the most pressing issues facing Libya in the aftermath of the regime's collapse.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

This report is the second installment of a four-part series on the revolution in Libya. Part Two: Escalation and Intervention details the international reaction to the war and the process that led to the U.S. and allied military intervention in March 2011. The paper begins with the initial international reaction to the uprising in Libya in the early spring of 2011 and the debate over a no-fly zone. This section documents efforts by the United States and its European allies to garner broader support for intervention in Libya, especially from Arab states. During this time, France, Great Britain, and the United States led international efforts to intervene in Libya. The third part of the paper explains the efforts to implement a no-fly zone under the U.S.-led Operation Odyssey Dawn in March 2011. This report concludes with a discussion of the NATO-led Operation Unified Protector and emerging tensions amongst NATO allies over the way forward in Libya.

### II. INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE CONFLICT IN LIBYA (FEBRUARY 18 TO MARCH 19)

The international intervention in Libya led by the United States, Britain and France that began on March 19, 2011 dramatically altered the course of the Libyan revolution. Anti-regime protests surged across the Middle East and North Africa after the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia in late January and early February. The astonishing speed at which Libya had descended into conflict was matched only by the speed the United States and its allies became involved in it. In a matter of four weeks, from February 17 to March 19, the United States and Europe reversed a decade of efforts aimed at normalizing political, commercial, and military ties with Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi and launched a military campaign against him. The response by Western leaders to the Libyan uprising was primed, in part, by their previous reactions to the events in Egypt and Tunisia. Leaders hastily called for Qaddafi to leave power, and politically committed to seeing to his departure, before it was clear whether the rebels would be able to topple him. As it became apparent that Qaddafi would crush the rebellion, Western leaders saw that it was imperative

to intervene to save the opposition and civilians and to pursue Qaddafi's removal by force.

The international community was quick to condemn Qaddafi's security forces' use of violence shortly after protests started. After the first day of major demonstrations on February 17, President Barack Obama condemned the violence against the protesters the following day. British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy made similar calls for restraint and immediately suspended their countries' military exports to Libya.<sup>1</sup> The protests in Libya appeared to mirror the popular nation-wide demonstrations in Egypt, Tunisia, and elsewhere, and the regime's use of force was initially characteristic of the violence in the region. But the fall of Benghazi and most of Cyrenaica to the protesters (who had turned into armed rebels) and the subsequent militarization and escalating use of force on both sides, marked the fundamental turning point towards a large-scale rebellion. For further information on the initial uprisings as well as background information on Libya, see Part One: Roots of Rebellion.

Early on, the Obama administration made private overtures to Libyan officials, urging them to show restraint. British Foreign Secretary William Hague made a similar appeal to Saif al-Islam, Qaddafi's second son and heir apparent, shortly before his dramatic speech defending the regime and denouncing the rebels on February 20.<sup>23</sup> Unlike President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Qaddafi would not be coaxed into leaving power peacefully. The United States and Europe had been able to restrain somewhat the Egyptian and Tunisian rulers from deploying their militaries against protesters by maneuvering around the leaders and leveraging their military-to-military ties, essentially removing pillars of support from under them and smoothing, if not ensuring, their exits.<sup>4</sup> There were no such relationships with Qaddafi's highly loyal paramilitary forces.<sup>5</sup>

In the United Kingdom, Cameron was more hawkish in his response as he distanced his government from Qaddafi and condemned the violence.<sup>6</sup> In a visit to post-Mubarak Egypt on February 21, Cameron labeled Qaddafi's actions, "completely appalling and unacceptable."<sup>7</sup> As the leader of the Conservative Party, Cameron had been critical of the policies of former Labour Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown toward Libya, as they were perceived as having a fairly

cozy relationship with Qaddafi.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, there was a lingering political scandal in the United Kingdom — and to a lesser degree in the United States — over the Scottish government's controversial decision in August 2009 to grant a compassionate medical release to Abdel Basit al-Megrahi. Al-Megrahi was a Libyan intelligence agent convicted of carrying out the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland in December 1988 that killed 270 people, most of them American and British citizens. Al-Megrahi's release and subsequent hero's welcome in Libya drew intense criticism of the Labour government from the conservative Tories and the United States. Moreover, the political scandal had resurfaced just before the uprising in Libya after Cameron's cabinet released a report in early February which concluded the Labour government had subtly lobbied the Scottish government to release al-Megrahi to protect British commercial interests.<sup>9</sup>

In France, Sarkozy appeared eager from the start of the rebellion to demonstrate his foreign policy leadership and he became an early champion of the rebels and of military intervention. Sarkozy sought to use Libya to revitalize his weak political standing at home ahead of the 2012 French elections.<sup>10</sup> Before the protests began in Libya, French politics and the Arab Spring became intertwined. Sarkozy and his cabinet came under heavy criticism from opposition parties and the media for mishandling the country's responses to the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Sarkozy and his government were perceived as being late to denounce the use of violence by the Tunisian security forces and then to break ties with Ben Ali, who France had backed as the strongman in its former colony for over two decades. Sarkozy and his Foreign Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie only publicly came out against Ben Ali until after he had fled the country on January 14.<sup>11</sup> Alliot-Marie also came under scrutiny after it was revealed she had vacationed in Tunisia during the anti-regime riots and had close personal ties to the regime.<sup>12</sup> Adding to the problem, the French government appeared to be complicit in Ben Ali's crackdown after Alliot-Marie offered to help train the Tunisian security forces in dealing with the protesters just days before he resigned and fled into exile.<sup>13</sup> After Sarkozy botched his response to the uprising in Tunisia, he was criticized for taking a backseat role during the protests in Egypt that saw the downfall of Mubarak. Sarkozy likely saw the uprising in Libya, which occurred days after Mubarak's fall, as a political opportunity to temper domestic critics and be on the forefront of a crisis. Sarkozy would

invariably keep his policies one step or more ahead of the United States and Britain, relentlessly pushing the allies towards intervening against Qaddafi.

As the fighting escalated, leaders in the United States, Britain, France, and elsewhere began coming under domestic political pressure to cut their ties to Qaddafi and take measures to punish his regime and support the protesters.<sup>14</sup> Obama further denounced the regime's violent actions on February 23 and said his administration was exploring the "full range of options" to respond to the crisis.<sup>15</sup> The Obama administration came under criticism that its response to the escalating conflict was far too mild, especially compared to the swift condemnations and escalating rhetoric coming from European allies. The White House countered that it was acting appropriately and restraining itself due to concerns that any belligerent actions or statements against Qaddafi could endanger the hundreds of American citizens and diplomats trying to flee Libya. The White House feared that Qaddafi could take Americans hostage or otherwise cause harm to them, a threat the administration cited as tying its hands until after the final evacuations of Americans.<sup>16</sup> Obama took his first concrete action against Qaddafi less than an hour after the last American citizens had safely departed Tripoli on February 25, signing an executive order imposing targeted financial sanctions on Qaddafi and regime figures and freezing certain Libyan funds.<sup>17</sup> Obama also cancelled all military contacts with Libya and ordered U.S. intelligence assets to shift their assets towards the spiraling violence and to begin monitoring loyalist troop and armor movements.<sup>18</sup> As Obama took his first steps on February 25, he still lagged behind the allies. Sarkozy made the first call for Qaddafi's departure the same day, declaring, "France's position is clear, Mr. Qaddafi must go."<sup>19</sup>

After Sarkozy's call for regime change, which caught other leaders' off-guard, frequent discussions began between Obama, Cameron, Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan to coordinate their policies towards Libya.<sup>20</sup> The Obama administration was willing to break entirely with Qaddafi but was unsure about backing the newly-organized National Transitional Council (NTC) in Benghazi. On February 26, in a conversation with Merkel, Obama remarked, "When a leader's only means of staying in power is to use mass violence against his own people, he has lost the legitimacy to rule and needs to do what is

right for his country by leaving now."<sup>21</sup> Although Obama waited a few more days before making an explicit public call for Qaddafi to leave power, his comments to Merkel were the first indication U.S. policy was shifting from mere condemnation towards the British and French demands for regime change. Obama's call for Qaddafi to leave power was made under considerable political pressure to do so and before the administration or the allies had decided on any course of action. Nevertheless, it committed the administration to seeking Qaddafi's ouster as the ultimate objective, leading to a widening gap between Obama's early rhetoric and his actions in the months ahead.

With support from the United States and Germany, Britain and France introduced a resolution in the UN Security Council pushing for multilateral sanctions against Qaddafi.<sup>22</sup> Russia had objected to an early British version that would have authorized states to broadly take "all measures necessary" to enable humanitarian aid deliveries, which Russia feared could have provided the basis for a military intervention.<sup>23</sup> The Security Council moved rapidly after Russia and China signaled they were willing to back limited sanctions against Qaddafi.<sup>24</sup> The few obstructions led to a rapid and unanimous adoption of Resolution 1970 (UNSCR 1970) on February 26. It:

- Granted the International Criminal Court (ICC) jurisdiction over all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Libya since February 15, 2011;
- Imposed an arms embargo on Libya, preventing member states from providing any sort of weapons or military equipment to Libya, enforced through inspections of inbound vessels and aircraft;
- Prohibited member states from allowing the transit of mercenaries to Libya;
- Imposed a travel ban on seventeen Libyan regime officials;
- Compelled member states to freeze the financial assets of six regime figures and members of the Qaddafi family, which were to be made available to the people of Libya.<sup>25</sup>

On February 27, a politically vulnerable Sarkozy sought to overcome his administration's tarnished record so

far in the Arab Spring and realign his supporters within his party with a major cabinet reshuffle — the second in three months. In a national address, Sarkozy declared a “new era” in French foreign policy in response to the Arab Spring. He said, “This is an historic change. ... We must not be afraid of it. We must have one sole aim: to accompany, support and help the people who have chosen freedom.”<sup>26</sup> Sarkozy brought in new ministers for the foreign affairs, defense, and interior ministries, notably dismissing the controversial foreign minister, Alliot-Marie, and replacing her with Defense Minister Alain Juppé.<sup>27</sup>

### *The No-Fly Zone Debate and the Allied Military Response*

The debate to take military action against Qaddafi intensified following the passage of UNSCR 1970 on February 26. Over the next month, the rebel’s position on the ground deteriorated as Qaddafi launched offensives against the rebels at Zawiyah, Misrata, and Cyrenaica (see Part I of this series). Britain and France led the charge for military action against Qaddafi, joined somewhat reluctantly, by the United States. Domestic politics strongly influenced leaders’ willingness or lack of enthusiasm to take action, and political obstacles would later tangle the participation of the United States and several other countries. While military action was far from inevitable, early into the uprising the United States and its allies began planning and putting the means to intervene in place by moving naval and air assets into the region. Still, the United States, Britain, and France were hesitant to undertake a military campaign against Qaddafi without the express support and participation of Arab states, authorization from the Security Council, and under the umbrella of NATO, requiring a broad diplomatic effort in a short period of time.

As the United States severed its relations with Qaddafi’s regime, it began to cautiously develop its ties to the rebels and consider military options. In the first few days after the rebellion began, Obama asked Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen to draw up detailed military options on Libya.<sup>28</sup> On February 28, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton revealed that the United States had already established contacts with the rebel leadership in Cyrenaica.<sup>29</sup> Clinton, in Geneva for consultations on Libya with European and Russian officials, gave a speech to the UN Human Rights Council in which she became the first U.S. official to unequivocally call for Qaddafi to leave. Clinton said,

“Qaddafi has lost the legitimacy to govern and it is time for him to go without further violence or delay.” In discussing the U.S. response, she added, “No option is off the table.”<sup>30</sup>

There was also growing support for the Obama administration to take military action from key members of Congress. On March 1, the Senate unanimously adopted Senate Resolution 85, which strongly condemned the violations of human rights in Libya and called on Qaddafi to resign in order to permit a peaceful democratic transition. The resolution urged the Security Council to take further steps to protect civilians from attack, “including the possible imposition of a no-fly zone over Libyan territory.”<sup>31</sup> Senior lawmakers called for Obama to take action, including Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senator John Kerry (D-Massachusetts), Senator John McCain (R-Arizona), and Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-Connecticut). McCain and Lieberman had urged Obama to impose a no-fly zone as early as February 22.<sup>32</sup> Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida), Chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Representative Mike Rogers (R-Michigan), Chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence also supported a no-fly zone.<sup>33</sup> While the Obama administration continued to harden its rhetoric against Qaddafi, it remained cautious and reluctant to publicly call for an intervention, aware that the United States would be expected to carry out and lead any military campaign it supported.

In private, however, a heated debate was emerging within the Obama administration over whether to use military force in Libya.<sup>34</sup> Within the administration, the advocates for a strong U.S. response, including the possibility of military force, included Clinton, Vice President Joseph Biden, UN Ambassador Susan Rice, and Samantha Power, senior director on the NSC for multilateral affairs and human rights.<sup>35</sup> Most were ardent critics of past American failures to respond adequately to genocide and mass killings in the Balkans, Rwanda, and Saddam-era Iraq.<sup>36</sup> The skeptics of using military force included Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon, and Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan.

While advocates in the Obama administration pondered taking action, there was a deep reluctance from senior military and intelligence officials to support a military



operation in Libya in light of the burden of the military commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. There was a growing disconnect from advocates that included senior administration officials, lawmakers, diplomats, and others who pushed for the no-fly zone as a relatively easy and straightforward humanitarian operation to protect civilians. Military officers, defense and intelligence officials, lawmakers, diplomats, and others were skeptical of the effectiveness of a no-fly zone to end the violence, and they cautioned about the hard military realities and level of commitment it would entail. They saw little strategic rationale for committing the U.S. military to a mission where there were no vital national security interests at stake, blurred political and military objectives, a limited use of force through airpower, no clear timeframe or endgame, and uncertain support from the American public.

The Libyan air force's effectiveness and impact on the conflict was debatable, as they seemed only to be striking static rebel targets and causing few casualties. Press accounts of the airstrikes relied heavily on unconfirmed eyewitness statements and may have created a false impression that Libyan warplanes were strafing large crowds of protesters and causing mass civilian casualties. Yet, Qaddafi's warplanes were largely bombing arms depots in order to deny the rebels weaponry. As early as March 1, a senior Obama administration official said that other than arms depots, they had not seen indications that the Libyan air force was bombing people.<sup>37</sup> Also that day, Gates and Mullen stated they had had no confirmation that Libyan aircraft had fired on civilians.<sup>38</sup> On March 8, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder supported the view that a no-fly zone would be ineffective. Daalder pointed out, "No-fly zones are more effective against fighters, but they really have a limited effect against...helicopters or the kind of ground operation that we've seen...Which is why a no-fly zone, even if it were to be established, isn't really going to impact what is happening."<sup>39</sup> Daalder indicated that the number of Libyan air sorties had been decreasing and concluded: "...the overall air activity has not been the deciding factor in the ongoing unrest."<sup>40</sup>

Other U.S. officials were reluctant to back a no-fly zone because of the lack of comprehensive intelligence about

the situation on the ground. Brennan worried that there was little understanding of the background and disposition of the rebels. Brennan also expressed concern that some elements could have ties to al-Qaeda affiliates or that Qaddafi would attempt to retaliate against the United States with terrorist attacks, as he had done in the past.<sup>41</sup> General Raymond Odierno, commander of Joint Forces Command, said that the U.S. military could impose a no-fly zone in a matter of days but cautioned, "I think Libya is going to be a long-term effort. People might think it's going to end tomorrow, but I think this is going to go on for a very long time."<sup>42</sup>

Supporters noted that the Libyan air force was rather small and stood no match against Western warplanes and that the country's air defenses were neither intricate nor insurmountable.<sup>43</sup> Yet these arguments snowballed and began to imply that a no-fly zone would be an easy operation and would not require preemptive airstrikes against Libyan air defenses and air assets, or that the mere threat of allied aircraft above would deter Qaddafi's pilots from flying. Other military options included establishing a humanitarian corridor in Egypt and Tunisia for refugees, jamming Qaddafi's military communications, bombing runways to prevent the Libyan air force from flying, and instituting a no-drive zone to separate Qaddafi forces from rebel-held areas, which would essentially partition the country.<sup>44</sup> While a number of military options were debated, each with various gradations in the use of force, in reality none of them would have been effective in stopping Qaddafi's ground forces from crushing the rebellion and killing civilians.<sup>45</sup>

As fighting between Qaddafi and the rebels continued into March, the pressure on Western leaders to intervene intensified. Britain and France were reluctant to act militarily without the United States and its vast capabilities, but as time passed, both signaled they were willing to consider taking action with or without the support of the United States.<sup>46</sup> Neither the Americans nor the Europeans wanted to appear to be taking unilateral military action against Libya. Obama, Cameron, and Sarkozy made clear that any military action had to be contingent on authorization from the Security Council. Yet this course of action seemed unlikely in early March

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as it would require the explicit approval of Russia and China, members of the Security Council with veto power that typically oppose interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and are wary of U.S. and European military campaigns. Russia and China had already uncharacteristically backed UNSCR 1970, taken as the furthest measure either was willing to support.

In Britain, Cameron began to favor intervention far earlier than the Obama administration, informing the House of Commons on February 28 “we do not in any way rule out the use of military assets. We must not tolerate this regime using military force against its own people.”<sup>47</sup> Cameron instructed the Ministry of Defense to work with British allies on plans for a no-fly zone.<sup>48</sup> Cameron and Hague came under increased scrutiny in early March following British special operations forces’ botched attempt to make contact with the rebel leadership in Benghazi. On March 3, a six-man Special Air Service (SAS) team along with two diplomats were dropped by helicopter on the outskirts of Benghazi and attempted to make contact with rebel leaders. Rebel fighters, skeptical of the group’s identity and intentions, arrested the team and detained them at a military base.<sup>49</sup> Two days later, Hague secured the soldiers’ release from rebel military chief General Fatah Younis and they withdrew to Malta.<sup>50</sup> The incident quickly became public and embarrassed the British government, which attributed the rebel actions to a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the incident added to criticism from the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats that Cameron and Hague were mishandling the situation in Libya.<sup>51</sup>

As the merits and scale of an intervention were debated, allied naval and air forces began building up in southern Europe and the Mediterranean in preparation for possible military action in late February.<sup>52</sup> U.S. and European officials proposed early on that NATO should be the umbrella for any military operation undertaken. The alliance needed the approval of all of its members in order to oversee the operation, but such a consensus was contingent on several factors, including a mandate from the UN.<sup>53</sup> NATO ministers held an emergency meeting in

Brussels on February 25 to discuss the situation in Libya. Following a proposal from Spain, the alliance agreed to deploy AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) surveillance aircraft and naval assets off the Libyan coast to monitor the situation. On March 7, NATO boosted its AWACS flights from ten to twenty-four hours a day to help the alliance plan for an intervention.<sup>54</sup> These assets deployed as part of NATO’s Operation Active Endeavor, which conducts counterterrorism and maritime security operation in the Mediterranean.<sup>55</sup>

The United States and its allies began planning and moving forces into the region relatively soon after the uprising, at first to assist in evacuations of civilians but soon to build up capability in the area in case leaders decided on a course of military action. Days after the

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rebellion began, Obama ordered Mullen to draw up detailed military options on Libya.<sup>56</sup> On February 27, officials from the White House, Pentagon, and State Department deliberated with European and NATO officials to discuss imposing a no-fly zone over Libya. U.S. warships started moving through the Suez Canal towards the Libyan coast, including the USS *Barry*, a guided-missile destroyer, and the Kearsarge Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). The Kearsarge ARG is comprised of the USS *Kearsarge*, an amphibious assault ship, and the USS *Ponce*, an amphibious transport dock ship.<sup>57</sup> The 26th Marine Expeditionary Group (MEU) was

embarked with the Kearsarge ARG alongside a squadron of AV-8B Harriers; however, the 1,400 Marines typically stationed with the Kearsarge ARG had been deployed to Afghanistan. This prompted the Pentagon to rush 400 Marines from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marines aboard to allow for the possibility of a military or humanitarian operation.<sup>58</sup> The Enterprise Carrier Strike Group, composed of the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*, along with two guided-missile destroyers and a guided-missile cruiser, was diverted to the Red Sea from the Gulf of Aden but was seemingly not ordered into the Mediterranean because it was busy supporting U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>59</sup> The United Kingdom had warplanes based in Malta ready to fly on short notice, while a British destroyer and frigate, which had assisted in the

evacuation of British national, remained in place off the Libyan coast.<sup>60</sup> France dispatched the helicopter carrier *Mistral* and the escort frigate *Georges-Leygues* to the Libyan coast.<sup>61</sup> On February 26, Italy suspended its 2008 friendship treaty with Libya, which contained a non-aggression clause that would have prevented Italy from using direct or indirect military force against Libya or allowing allies to use Italian territory, including major U.S. and NATO airbases.<sup>62</sup>

Internal divisions between Obama administration officials appeared to be widening over a possible intervention, as the administration struggled to present a coherent public position while it privately determined its course of action.<sup>63</sup> Some officials stepped up rhetoric against Qaddafi and pushed towards the no-fly zone, while others publicly warned against it. On March 3, President Obama made his first public call for Qaddafi to leave power, explicitly stating, “The violence must stop. Muammar Qaddafi has lost legitimacy to lead and he must leave.”<sup>64</sup> He indicated that he had given the U.S. military the “full capacity to act, potentially rapidly” if the situation worsened and that he was considering a range of options.<sup>65</sup> Obama remained cautious, insisting that the United States was, “slowly tightening the noose” around Qaddafi’s regime with sanctions, while it was in the national interest to see Qaddafi leave power.<sup>66</sup> As the debate in Washington intensified, Gates became the most visible skeptic of military action within the Obama administration.<sup>67</sup> He cautioned against undertaking a military campaign in another Muslim country and warned it would draw resources from efforts in Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> On March 2, the day before Obama’s public statement, Gates expressed his frustration in testimony to Congress over the “loose talk” regarding military options in Libya.<sup>69</sup> Gates bluntly refuted the notion that a no-fly zone would be an innocuous operation. He explained that establishing a no-fly zone would require a significant attack on Libyan air defenses and capabilities to ensure the safety of patrolling warplanes and that any such operation would require a large number of aircraft.<sup>70</sup> Mullen expressed similar views on the complexity and utility of a no-fly zone.<sup>71</sup> General James Mattis, commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), later supported this view and argued that a no-fly zone would be militarily challenging. He echoed Gates’ frustration with advocates, telling lawmakers that, “so no illusions here. It would be a military operation. It wouldn’t simply be telling people not to fly airplanes.”<sup>72</sup>

While the United States cautiously debated and monitored the situation in Libya, Britain, and France were pushing ahead with intervention. British and French officials, frustrated by the U.S. reluctance, quietly suggested they might take action with or without the United States and NATO. Britain and France prepared draft language for a no-fly zone resolution in the Security Council. On March 10, Sarkozy met with rebel leaders Mahmood Jibril and Ali Al Issawi in Paris, and afterwards announced that France was extending diplomatic recognition to the NTC.<sup>73</sup> France, again outpacing the United States and Britain, became the first country to recognize the rebels as Libya’s legitimate government.<sup>74</sup> Sarkozy also threatened Qaddafi with airstrikes, including bombing his Bab al-Aziziya compound in Tripoli and major airbases in Sirte and Sabha.<sup>75</sup> At an emergency EU summit on March 11, Sarkozy announced that France and Britain were ready to strike Qaddafi if they received the support of the UN, the Arab League, and the NTC.<sup>76</sup> The British and French efforts, however, faced strong skepticism from Germany and Italy over any collective action through NATO or EU.<sup>77</sup> The EU summit wrapped up with a declaration that Qaddafi no longer had legitimacy and must leave power, but leaders reached no agreement on military action.<sup>78</sup>

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper made revealing but controversial remarks in his testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 10 that again called into question the effectiveness of a no-fly zone alone. Clapper predicted that absent an outside intervention, Qaddafi would be able to leverage his superior military forces against the rebels in the long term and eventually prevail.<sup>79</sup> Clapper also dispelled rumors that Qaddafi was ready to abdicate, stating, “We believe that Qaddafi is in this for the long haul. I don’t think he has any intention—despite some of the press speculation to the contrary—of leaving. From all the evidence we have ... he appears to be hunkering down for the duration.” Clapper also highlighted the relative insignificance of the Libyan air force, characterizing them as “akin to the gang that can’t shoot straight, since they’re doing this [bombing] visually, and have not caused very many casualties, although some physical damage.”<sup>80</sup> Aside from bombing arms depots, the regime on occasions used airstrikes on rebel checkpoints on the coastal highway—which would quickly rout the untrained rebels, whether the bombs were accurate or not. Qaddafi appeared to be turning the rebels back in Cyrenaica using only airstrikes and perhaps artillery, but

this was because his ground forces barely had to engage. Rebel lines would break after making initial contact or, when rebels did stand and fight, they often lost or barely held. Although Defense Intelligence Agency Director Lieutenant General Ronald Burgess immediately supported Clapper's candid views that Qaddafi would prevail, it was nevertheless a controversial assessment.<sup>81</sup> Unsettled that the administration may have resigned itself to an inevitable Qaddafi victory, several senators called for Clapper's resignation. But the Obama administration distanced itself from the assessment provided by its senior intelligence chief. Donilon quickly rebutted Clapper's analysis, suggesting it was a "a static and one-dimensional assessment" that had not taken into account the pressure the United States and international community were putting on Qaddafi through economic sanctions, travel bans, and asset freezes.<sup>82</sup>

Due to the intense focus on imposing a no-fly zone, many advocates and analysts ignored the fact that Qaddafi was bringing all of his military strength to bear against the rebels. The debate about the no-fly zone and whether to intervene did not address the enormous advantages the regime's ground forces enjoyed against the disorganized and poorly armed rebels. Policymakers on both sides of the debate failed to take into account Qaddafi's qualitative military advantages over the rebels, and this would render a no-fly zone irrelevant.<sup>83</sup>

#### *Arab Buy-In*

As the situation in Libya deteriorated and pressure grew on regional players to become involved, Libya became entangled in the politics of the turmoil affecting the Arab world. The United States and European allies, still debating their options on Libya, had predicated any military intervention on the basis of having international and regional support. The first sign of regional support came from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a regional alliance made up of the six Gulf monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

After a meeting of GCC ministers in Abu Dubai on March 7, leaders of the Gulf States announced their unanimous

support for UNSCR 1970 and demanded the Security Council take all necessary measures to protect Libyan civilians, including the creation of a no-fly zone over Libya.<sup>84</sup> Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies were troubled by the escalating protests in Bahrain, where Shia protesters threatened to bring down the Saudi-backed Sunni monarch. Furthermore, the fall of Arab leaders in Egypt and Tunisia and the speed with which the United States and Europe removed their support from long-standing allies in Egypt and Tunisia unnerved Arab leaders. The GCC's support for the Libyan no-fly zone, however, created little political traction with the United States and Europe without an endorsement from the larger Arab League and without some symbolic Arab military participation. The GCC pushed the Arab League to take responsibility for the Arab response to the fighting in Libya and requested an emergency meeting of the body.<sup>85</sup>

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On March 12, the twenty-two member Arab League held an emergency summit in Cairo to discuss the region's response to the violence in Libya. The Arab League expressed its intent to communicate with the National Transitional Council and requested that the UN Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya and establish safe havens for civilians.<sup>86</sup> Yet the Arab League's support for the Libyan no-fly zone was hardly a sign

of cohesive Arab support. The Arab League's decision, made behind closed doors, appears to have been far from unanimous. The strongest support for the measure came from the six members of the GCC, who had requested the emergency session to push for the no-fly zone. Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco likely joined them.<sup>87</sup> Syria, Algeria, Sudan and Mauritania reportedly opposed the decision (Libya could not oppose because it had been suspended from the body on February 22).<sup>88</sup> Several key Arab states, such as Iraq and post-revolutionary Egypt and Tunisia, appeared uncomfortable with openly backing another Western military intervention in the Middle East and remained silent throughout the debate.

It seems ironic that the support of military action to protect civilians and back a quasi-democratic movement against Qaddafi was conditioned on the support of his authoritarian neighbors. The GCC's strong support for the United States and its allies to intervene in Libya

was likely because Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies was a favor to the West by providing their intervention with Arab legitimacy, and to deflect attention away from the impending crackdown on protesters in Bahrain. On March 14, two days after the GCC spearheaded the Arab League's endorsement of the Libyan no-fly zone, more than 1,200 Saudi and 800 Emirate troops entered Bahrain to assist Bahraini security forces in crushing weeks-long demonstrations against the monarchy.<sup>89</sup> Eventually, security forces from all six of the GCC states participated in subduing the protests in Bahrain in some way, including Qatar and the UAE which nearly simultaneously was being courted to participate by U.S. and European officials to partake in operations in Libya to protect protesters.

Although U.S. and European officials placed a strong emphasis on garnering international support for military action, they largely ignored the staunch opposition from the African Union (seen in some quarters as pro-Qaddafi). Instead, the Arab League's endorsement was heralded as a sign of regional support. The Western allies praised the Arab League's move as a sign of Arab willingness to participate in military action. Clinton called the Arab League's endorsement "an extraordinary statement of leadership and real conviction." Further, Clinton indicated that Arab support was pivotal and "opened up some doors that were closed."<sup>90</sup>

### *The Final Push for Intervention*

France spearheaded an effort to obtain an agreement from the Group of Eight (G-8) for military action on Libya, becoming more insistent that the United States and other European countries take a position. Clinton was in Paris for the talks, gathering diplomatic support for a possible intervention, but the White House had yet to make a firm decision. On March 14, Clinton was in Paris for the G-8 talks on Libya Clinton met with NTC representative Jibril, and he pressed Clinton for a no-fly zone and weapons.<sup>91</sup> Clinton met with counterparts and leaders from France, Britain, Russia, Canada, Germany, Italy, and Japan, as well as with UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.<sup>92</sup> Although she criticized the UAE's decision to send troops into Bahrain, she pressed the Gulf monarchy to contribute military forces to the possible intervention in Libya. Clinton received confirmation from Qatar and the UAE that they would send aircraft to Libya, securing the symbolic Arab military participation the administration sought.<sup>93</sup>

By March 15, the U.S. position on military action in Libya remained unsettled, but time was running short to intervene. Loyalist forces were driving the rebels back towards Benghazi, and if Qaddafi reclaimed the city, there would hardly be an opposition for the United States and Europe to throw their support behind.<sup>94</sup> Lebanon, Britain and France pushed a resolution at the UN Security Council calling for the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya that was tailored to the limited intervention outwardly favored by the United States. The situation on the ground and the impending UN resolution vote set a deadline for the U.S. decision on taking action in Libya.<sup>95</sup> In just over a week, the administration had met most of its criteria to take part in the mission, including the participation of major European allies, public support from the Arab League, military buy-in from several Arab states. Diplomatic groundwork with Russia was also underway to ensure the mission had the backing of the Security Council. Obama met on March 15 with his senior national security advisors, including Gates, Clinton, Mullen, Rice, Donilon, Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough, and NSC adviser Ben Rhodes, to decide the U.S. course of action.<sup>96</sup> Obama was briefed that Qaddafi's forces would likely retake Ajdabiya within the next day and then launch an assault on the rebel capital of Benghazi. Qaddafi had threatened to retaliate against the city, and there were palpable fears that the loyalists would massacre rebels and civilians. Obama's military and intelligence advisors informed him that a no-fly zone would not be effective, as Qaddafi was beating the rebels back with his infantry, tanks, and artillery. The uprising was collapsing under the weight of Qaddafi's onslaught; merely grounding the Libyan air force and destroying its air defenses would not stop the loyalist troops advancing towards Benghazi. A mission limited to a no-fly zone would leave allied warplanes circling helplessly over Qaddafi's forces as they crushed the rebellion. The political cost of not intervening, which had become quite high domestically and internationally, would dwarf the cost of committing to an intervention and having it subsequently fail as Qaddafi swept the rebels aside.

Obama ordered his advisors to draw up more robust military options. Obama, Gates, and Mullen broke up the session for a previously scheduled meeting and dinner with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Combatant Commanders, where Obama solicited their input on the potential military challenges in Libya.<sup>97</sup> During the

break, Donilon and McDonough quickly drew up three possible courses of action in Libya. The first option was for the United States to undertake a combination of military efforts, including airstrikes against Libyan ground forces, in addition to imposing a no-fly zone and providing humanitarian aid. The second option called for just a no-fly zone and humanitarian aid, and the third limited U.S. involvement to humanitarian aid.<sup>98</sup> Rice also prepared a broader Security Council resolution that would authorize a bombing campaign against Qaddafi's ground forces, in addition to the no-fly zone. Obama reconvened the meeting in the Situation Room around 9:00 p.m. and Donilon presented the three options he and McDonough had drawn up. After deliberating, a consensus emerged that a no-fly zone was insufficient to stop Qaddafi but that political and diplomatic avenues were exhausted.<sup>99</sup> Obama instructed Rice to pursue the more muscular resolution that would authorize "all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians at the Security Council, broad diplomatic language that permitted a bombing campaign against Qaddafi's ground forces in addition to the no-fly zone.<sup>100</sup> Obama then ordered Mullen to have the Pentagon finalize a "Concept of Operation Plan" for an allied military campaign in Libya by the next day.<sup>101</sup>

Interestingly, the previous month's debate had largely been over whether to impose a no-fly zone over Libya or undertake other limited military actions. U.S. and allied officials had not openly discussed the possibility of a bombing campaign against Qaddafi's ground forces prior to Obama's decision on March 15. Nevertheless, the political pressure to intervene and the impetus to prevent Qaddafi from crushing the rebellion and remaining in power had caught up with the military reality that for any intervention to be successful it required a greater use of force.

On March 16, Mullen hand-delivered the Pentagon's military options for Libya to Donilon at the White House. During this timeframe, Obama signed a secret presidential finding authorizing the CIA to provide arms and other support to the rebels, a legal step towards opening an arms pipeline and other means of support to the rebels. No weapons, however, were sent to the rebels

(or have been publicly acknowledged as of September 2011).<sup>102</sup>

Before the presidential finding, small groups of CIA personnel were already on the ground liaising with rebel leaders and gathering intelligence, but the finding allowed an expansion of their activities.<sup>103</sup> The British also deployed dozens of MI6 operatives to coordinate with the rebel leadership. They also took an additional step of deploying SAS and Special Boat Service (SBS) teams on the ground to prepare for airstrikes by getting intelligence on locations such as airfields, anti-air defenses, and communications facilities.<sup>104</sup> French special operations forces may have also deployed to eastern Libya around this time to assist in coordinating the air campaign with the rebels.<sup>105</sup>

By March 17, loyalists had taken Ajdabiya and were advancing northeast towards Benghazi, but they were meeting a stubborn resistance from rebels along the way.<sup>106</sup> With the rebel capital threatened by Qaddafi's forces, the United States and its allies pressed hard for the Security Council to pass the resolution. Russia and China, however, were opposed to intervention in Libya and the threat of a veto loomed. Even barring a veto, it was unclear whether the United States, Britain, and France had the nine votes needed to pass

the resolution on the fifteen-member Security Council. Clinton conferred with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the Russia's position. Russia had previously announced its opposition to an intervention in Libya, but pressure from the Obama administration, its "reset" relationship with the Kremlin, and political differences between President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin led to an agreement that the Russians would abstain on the Security Council vote.<sup>107</sup> Without a Russian veto, the Chinese also fell in line and also agreed to abstain.<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, Obama and Rice successfully courted the support of non-permanent members South Africa, Nigeria (both considered sympathetic to Qaddafi), Bosnia, and Portugal for the vote.<sup>109</sup>

On March 17 the Security Council voted to authorize Resolution 1973 (UNSCR 1973). It granted member states, acting independently or through regional

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organizations or arrangements, the authority to use “all necessary measures” to protect Libyan civilians under threat of attack from Libyan military forces.<sup>110</sup> UNSCR 1973 also allowed the imposition of a no-fly zone, a strict arms embargo—including the prevention of armed mercenaries from entering the country—enforced by inspections of vessels and flights bound for Libya, the freezing of the regime’s assets, and a travel ban on Libyan officials. The resolution expressly prohibited any foreign ground forces from occupying Libyan territory.<sup>111</sup> While no Security Council member opposed the resolution, the vote was not unanimous. Ten members voted in favor, one more than required, but five members abstained. Three permanent members—the United States, Britain, and France—voted for the resolution, as did Bosnia, Colombia, Gabon, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, and South Africa.<sup>112</sup> Permanent members Russia and China, along with Brazil, India and Germany, subtly expressed their opposition to the resolution in the form of abstention. In a surprising move Germany opposed the mission, likely because of Merkel’s hesitation to commit to a potentially risky operation just a few days before important state elections in Germany.<sup>113</sup>

On March 17, with UNSCR 1973 in hand, Obama gave the final authorization for airstrikes against Libya during a meeting of the National Security Council at the White House.<sup>114</sup> NATO had been tapped to head the operation from the start of military planning, but an agreement among all twenty-eight members of the alliance had not yet been struck. Key members such as Germany and Turkey were reluctant to be drawn into the conflict through the alliance. This left the United States the reluctant leader of the operation with a coalition of European and Arab allies. Obama sought to limit U.S. involvement to a matter of “days, not weeks” and was adamant that no U.S. ground troops would be deployed to Libya, limiting the ground footprint to CIA operatives.<sup>115</sup> The mission was to be quickly handed off to the coalition, with Britain and France taking the lead, once an agreement was forged to act under NATO.<sup>116</sup> The following day, Obama privately met with Congressional leaders, including Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nevada), Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Tennessee), House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-California), to confer with them on his course of action in Libya.<sup>117</sup> Shortly afterward, Obama delivered public remarks in which he demanded Qaddafi abide by UNSCR 1973 and halt his troops’ advance towards

Benghazi and pull back from Ajdabiya, Misrata, and Zawiyah.<sup>118</sup> Obama explicitly warned Qaddafi that the terms were unconditional and if he failed to comply with UNSCR 1973, “the resolution will be enforced through military action.”<sup>119</sup> Shortly afterward, the United States, Britain, France, and several Arab states jointly delivered the same ultimatum to Qaddafi: immediately cease fire, withdraw from contested cities, and stop attacking civilians or face military action.<sup>120</sup> Libyan Foreign Minister Moussa Koussa announced government forces would cease fire, giving the allies a moment of pause that perhaps the ultimatums had worked. The ceasefire, however, proved to be a ruse to buy time for the regime’s offensives. Loyalist forces continued headlong up the coastal highway towards Benghazi, while the regime made a significant attack into the besieged city of Misrata. Qaddafi likely estimated he had time before the allies were prepared to attack, and had a narrow window in which his forces could crush the rebellion and render an intervention pointless.<sup>121</sup>

On March 19, as loyalist forces reached the outskirts of Benghazi, France hastily convened a meeting in Paris to arrange coalition policies in Libya. As diplomats assembled in Paris, allied warplanes from the United States, Britain, France, and other countries assembled on airbases across Europe, and were poised to strike Libya that night.<sup>122</sup> The Paris Summit was convened to craft the Coalition’s political and military agenda. Participants included leaders and senior diplomats from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Canada, Norway, Qatar, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates, along with representatives from the UN, the European Union, and the Arab League.<sup>123</sup> During the Paris Summit, French warplanes surprised attendees by commencing combat operations over Libya early with airstrikes against the loyalist forces outside of Benghazi.<sup>124</sup> At the conclusion of the summit, the participants made a joint declaration to enforce UNSCR 1973 with all necessary actions, including military force.<sup>125</sup> With most Coalition military forces in place, the political and military backing of several Arab states, and authorization from the Security Council, the United States and its allies launched Operation Odyssey Dawn on March 19.

### III. OPERATION ODYSSEY DAWN (MARCH 19 TO MARCH 31, 2011)

Early in the morning on March 19, loyalist troops that had been advancing up the coastal highway towards the rebel capital of Benghazi began to reach the city's outskirts. Coalition military operations against the Qaddafi regime were set to commence later that evening following the conclusion of the Paris Summit, where leaders and top officials had convened to lay out their political and military objectives in Libya after UNSCR 1973 passed just two days before. With Benghazi threatened, Sarkozy preemptively ordered French warplanes into Libyan airspace above Benghazi to protect the city from the loyalist offensive in the middle of the summit. Twenty French aircraft, including eight Rafales and four Mirage 2000s fighters, began enforcing a no-fly zone over Benghazi.<sup>126</sup> After attaining air superiority over Benghazi, the French warplanes conducted airstrikes against the advancing column of loyalist tanks, infantry and artillery, which were exposed along the coastal highway.<sup>127</sup> The French strikes, seemingly poorly coordinated with the United States and other countries, drew criticism that Sarkozy had again preempted the allies for the political prize of visibly leading the intervention.<sup>128</sup>

The United States began Operation Odyssey Dawn (OOD)\* on March 19 several hours after the French strikes outside of Benghazi.<sup>129</sup> The opening waves of U.S. attacks were designed to cripple Qaddafi's air defenses and air force, which would pave the way for manned flights over Libya to enforce the no-fly zone and strike Qaddafi's ground forces. On the evening of March 19, U.S. and British warships and submarines in the Mediterranean launched approximately one hundred and twenty Tomahawk cruise missiles against more than twenty integrated air defense system targets.<sup>130</sup> The missiles struck anti-aircraft systems, surface-to-air missiles, early warning radar sites, and communications facilities located in Qaddafi-controlled areas.<sup>131</sup> U.S. aircraft began electronic attacks on Libya's military

communications systems to further disrupt the regime's defenses.<sup>132</sup>

The United States took the lead role in the international coalition. General Carter F. Ham, the head of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) led OOD from AFRICOM's headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany.<sup>133</sup> Ham had only taken command of the theater barely two weeks earlier, and OOD was the first major military operation conducted by AFRICOM, the newest Unified Combatant Command established in October 2008. Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III served as Joint Tactical Commander for OOD. He performed a dual role as Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa and the NATO Commander of Allied Joint Force Command, Naples, serving from the command ship *USS Mount Whitney* in the Mediterranean.<sup>134</sup> U.S. air operations were overseen by Major General Margaret Woodward, Commander of the 17th Air Force and U.S. Air Forces Africa, who served as Joint Force Air Component Commander at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany.<sup>135</sup> Due to the hasty nature of the intervention, there was no integrated coalition command structure, so partners each coordinated their actions separately with the United States under Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn. Liaison officers from participating countries abroad the *USS Mount Whitney* and at AFRICOM headquarters and the joint air command center in Germany were pivotal to coordinating coalition actions.<sup>136</sup>

The opening salvo of U.S. and British cruise missile strikes on March 19 was followed that night by a wave of strikes from U.S. bomber aircraft. Three B-2 Spirit stealth bombers flying from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri dropped dozens of precision-guided munitions on Ghardabiya Air Base south of Sirte.<sup>137</sup> The B-2s targeted several dozen hardened aircraft shelters that likely housed Su-22s and MiG-23/27s, some of the Libyan air force's best aircraft, striking 45 targets with 2000-pound JDAMs.<sup>138</sup> The raid on Ghardabiya was augmented by several Tomahawk cruise missiles fired from U.S. ships offshore that also hit aircraft shelters.<sup>139</sup> After the successful B-2 raid, two B-1B bombers flying from Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota conducted two large bombing runs against Qaddafi's military infrastructure, including air defenses, combat aircraft, command and control centers, vehicle storages, and ammunition depots.<sup>140</sup> In the three bombing runs, the B-2s and B-1Bs hit approximately 150 key military targets.<sup>141</sup> Locklear outlined the basic campaign plan,

\*Before all allied operations were absorbed under NATO's Operation Unified Protector on March 31, 2011, allied forces conducted military action under different names. The U.S. military operation was Operation Odyssey Dawn, the French participation was under *Opération Harmattan*, the British participation was under Operation ELLAMY, and the Canadian participation was under Operation Mobile. For simplicity, the authors refer to Operation Odyssey Dawn for all allied military action before Unified Protector.



explaining, “We started out with a large missile campaign and then we went to the no-fly zone. As coalition forces flowed in, we initially established ... a smaller no-fly zone, primarily centered over Benghazi, because that was our center of focus from the beginning. Now that we have been able to shape the battlespace more, that no-fly zone has expanded ... and as the capability of the coalition grows, it will be able to provide more support, more missions ... towards ground forces.”<sup>142</sup> The sorties from heavy bombers ended shortly thereafter. Most of Libya’s air defenses and air forces were effectively destroyed; clearing the airspace for low-flying tactical combat aircraft to operate more safely. Moreover, the large number of tanker aircraft needed to support the intercontinental bombing missions placed a considerable strain on the operation’s logistics, foreshadowing a major hurdle NATO would face in sustaining the air campaign.<sup>143</sup> U.S. warships continued to launch cruise missiles intermittently at air defenses, but the preliminary military objectives were largely accomplished, and the focus shifted towards striking Qaddafi’s ground forces.<sup>144</sup>

With the no-fly zone established over Cyrenaica and gradually expanded over the rest of the country, U.S. and coalition combat aircraft began conducting airstrikes on loyalist ground forces on the eastern front. In the early morning hours of March 20, fifteen AV-8B Harriers, F-15Es and F-16CJs, joined by British Tornado GR4s and French Rafales, resumed strikes against the loyalist forces along the coastal highway south of Benghazi.<sup>145</sup> The airstrikes inflicted heavy damage, demolishing approximately fourteen tanks, twenty armored personnel carriers, two multiple rocket launchers, and dozens of pickup trucks and technicals.<sup>146</sup>

On the night of March 21, the coalition experienced its first aircraft loss after a U.S. F-15E Strike Eagle flying from Aviano Air Base in Italy malfunctioned and crashed twenty-five miles southwest of Benghazi.<sup>147</sup> The pilot and weapons officer safely ejected but landed apart from each other in rebel-held territory. Two AV-8B Harriers and an F-16 were overhead to provide protection for the pilot while Marines from the 26<sup>th</sup> MEU aboard the Kearsarge ARG were dispatched to rescue the downed

crewmembers in two MV-22B Ospreys supported by two CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters. While the pilot awaited rescue, an unidentified ground force began approaching his position, which the Harriers hit with two 500-pound bombs shortly before an Osprey landed and retrieved him. Rebel fighters recovered the weapons officer, who was promptly returned with the assistance of CIA officers on the ground.<sup>148</sup> The rescue operation stirred controversy after media reports that the bombs had actually wounded several curious Libyan civilians or rebels.

The initial stages of the coalition’s intervention were successful, but it caught publics in the United States and Europe somewhat by surprise. In the United States, there was a generally skeptical and negative reaction from Congress and the public that the nation was suddenly engaged in a third war overseas. Obama defended U.S.

involvement in Libya. He ordered U.S. warplanes over Libya to avert a humanitarian catastrophe and prevent a “blood bath” at Benghazi, not to undertake regime change, he said. He insisted that the United States involvement was limited and that it would not be drawn into a wider war in Libya.<sup>149</sup> As the fight in Libya continued on the ground and in the air, the administration moved to swiftly transition command to NATO in order to minimize the U.S. role and allow Britain and France to

take the lead. Shortly after the airstrikes commenced, Obama, Sarkozy and Cameron had reached a tentative agreement that NATO would take over the operation.<sup>150</sup> Obama and administration officials stated the U.S. combat role would last a matter of “days, not weeks” as it handed off the operation to NATO.<sup>151</sup>

However, political obstacles surfaced within NATO. There was serious debate among NATO members as to whether the alliance should take command of the operation at all. All twenty-eight members of NATO had to approve of the alliance assuming command of OOD, but many in the alliance were reluctant to shoulder the mission. Further, the negotiations on the transfer of command and the actual transfer itself were complicated by the fact the international intervention under U.S. command had three different components: the maritime arms embargo, the no-fly zone, and the airstrike

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campaign against Libyan ground forces. NATO members came to an agreement on March 22 that the alliance would take command of the fairly innocuous maritime arms embargo. On March 23, NATO's Operation Unified Protector (OUP) began with a mandate limited to enforcing an arms embargo on Libya.<sup>152</sup> While the transition to NATO began smoothly, the significantly more controversial no-fly zone and the aerial bombing campaign remained under U.S. command. Germany, which opposed the intervention and had abstained at the Security Council on UNSCR 1973, initially objected to the takeover and even withdrew four of its ships in the Mediterranean from NATO command.<sup>153</sup> France was reluctant to have a complete NATO takeover of the operation but sought political leadership of the mission, a demand that drew objections from countries that sought full NATO command.<sup>154</sup> Britain and Italy pressed hard for a NATO takeover, and the Italians threatened to review the use of their airbases for the operation if the alliance did not take command.<sup>155</sup> France argued the hand-off would alienate the Arab participants, Qatar and the UAE, who were hesitant to operate under the NATO banner against another Muslim nation.<sup>156</sup> The holdups in the transition from U.S. to NATO command led to a flurry of negotiations between Obama, Sarkozy, Cameron, Erdogan, and Qatar Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. Eventually, the military campaign was placed under NATO command, while a separate coordinating group was created for the coalition at large to orchestrate their policies towards supporting the rebels and dealing with Qaddafi, which was created as the Libyan Contact Group on March 29.<sup>157</sup>

Turkey's opposition to the intervention and its hesitation to break relations with Qaddafi posed one of the largest roadblocks. Sarkozy had excluded Turkey from the Paris Summit due to its reluctance to support military action, despite the inclusion of Germany and other countries that expressed reluctance to intervene. Turkey and France have been at odds on their foreign policies, as Sarkozy has been among the most vocal opponents of Turkey's accession to the European Union. Egemen Bagis, the Turkish Minister for European Union Affairs and head negotiator for Turkey's accession, publicly accused Sarkozy of exploiting the Libya crisis to gain a political advantage ahead of France's presidential election in 2012.<sup>158</sup> Despite mixed public opinion in Turkey over the operation, on March 24 Erdogan secured parliamentary approval for Turkey's participation in the arms embargo and the no-fly zone.<sup>159</sup> After much wrangling in Brussels,

Turkey reversed its position and backed the NATO handoff, in addition to contributing Turkish ships and aircraft to the no-fly zone and arms embargo.<sup>160</sup>

On March 24, NATO agreed to take command of the no-fly zone from the United States. However, there was still no consensus on whether the alliance would also take command of the air campaign against loyalist ground forces. Under intense pressure from the Obama administration, the United States, Britain, France and Turkey agreed that all of the coalition operations would be placed under NATO command but called for an end to the airstrikes against loyalist ground forces if NATO were to command of the operation.<sup>161</sup> Once Turkey was on board, Germany agreed to approve the mission but not participate (along with almost half the alliance). With the objections of France and the Arab participants met half-way, the final agreement was struck on March 28 to incorporate the airstrikes under NATO command. On March 31, NATO announced it had assumed sole responsibility for air operations over Libya, including the airstrikes, under the auspices of OUP.<sup>162</sup>

With command transferred to NATO, the United States began to withdraw its air assets from the campaign and minimize its involvement. Amid the growing domestic criticism of U.S. involvement in Libya, Obama delivered a national address to explain the intervention in Libya on March 28. He argued that intervening was necessary to avoid a massacre at Benghazi and that the mission was in America's interests. He said the military role would be limited to protecting civilians, not imposing regime change.<sup>163</sup> Gates and Mullen, testifying in front of the House Armed Services Committee on March 31, echoed Obama's position and indicated that U.S. forces would draw down its role while still providing the allies the unique capabilities that others lacked. Gates outlined the future U.S. role and objectives in Libya:

Going forward, the U.S. military will provide the capabilities that others cannot provide, either in kind or in scale, such as electronic warfare, aerial refueling, lift, search and rescue, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support. Accordingly, we will, in coming days, significantly ramp down our commitment of other military capabilities and resources. The NATO-led mission, like its predecessor,

is a limited one. It will maintain pressure on Qaddafi's remaining forces to prevent attacks on civilians, enforce the no-fly zone and arms embargo, and provide humanitarian relief. There will be no American boots on the ground in Libya. Deposing the Qaddafi regime, as welcome as that eventuality would be, is not part of the military mission.<sup>164</sup>

The U.S. role was limited to electronic warfare, aerial refueling, logistical support, search and rescue, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). U.S. combat aircraft, including AC-130s and A-10s, were placed on standby at airbases in Italy in case NATO commanders requested them, with an expectation that they not be.<sup>165</sup>

As operational command shifted from the coalition to NATO, loyalist forces conducted a counteroffensive against rebel forces on the eastern front. Fewer airstrikes were conducted as NATO took command, which was attributed to confusion during the changeover, poor weather over Libya, and a change in the loyalists' tactics to make them appear more like civilians and rebels. U.S. combat aircraft were scheduled to halt airstrike missions over Libya on April 3. However, the United States agreed to a request from NATO commander Canadian Lt. General Charles Bouchard for a forty-eight-hour extension of American airstrikes.<sup>166</sup> U.S. warplanes officially ended their combat role in Libya on the evening of April 4. One of the final U.S. attacks came fifteen minutes before the deadline with Harriers striking loyalist targets south of Misrata.<sup>167</sup>

The United States provided the majority of the military assets, firepower, logistical support, and command and control in the initial phase of the coalition intervention from March 19 to March 31. In two weeks, U.S. aircraft had flown 1,206 (63 percent) of the 1,990 of the total coalition sorties over Libya and conducted 463 (49 percent) of the 952 total coalition strike sorties. Additionally, the United States launched 221 Tomahawk cruise missiles at Libyan targets, while the United Kingdom fired seven.<sup>168</sup> At the height of OOD, approximately 150 to 175 U.S. aircraft and twelve naval vessels offshore had been involved in some capacity, representing slightly more than half the approximately 350 total coalition aircraft and twenty naval vessels involved.<sup>169</sup>

From a military standpoint, given the limited mandate and short planning timeframe, the U.S. and allied militaries conducted the operation outstandingly. Qaddafi's forces were prevented from assaulting Benghazi, protecting the rebel capital from falling. Britain, France and the other NATO nations taking the lead did not possess the capabilities to conduct the campaign in the same manner. The role of the U.S. military was clearly indispensable and remained so even as NATO took over.

#### IV. OPERATION UNIFIED PROTECTOR (MARCH 31, 2011 TO SEPTEMBER 2011)

Operation Unified Protector began in earnest on March 31 after NATO assumed command of coalition military actions in Libya from the United States, with the transition fully completed by April 4.<sup>170</sup> The mere fact that the campaign in Libya began as a U.S.-led operation rather than under NATO command was a sign of the obstacles ahead for the alliance. NATO faced the difficult task of resolving the contradiction between the far-reaching political objectives to remove Qaddafi that the United States, Britain, France, and others had committed themselves to, and the limited military mandate and forces the alliance brought to bear on the ground. Above all, the United States and its European allies were unprepared politically and militarily for the conflict to stretch on as long as it did.

Some NATO members' limited participation in actual operations undercut the strong emphasis placed on multilateralism. The efforts to attain the Security Council Resolution authorizing an intervention, secure Arab military participation, and act under the NATO umbrella did not produce broad international participation in the operation. Only fourteen of NATO's twenty-eight members contributed forces to Unified Protector: Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain, Turkey, and the United States. A mere four non-NATO members joined the operation: Sweden, Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. The absence of Germany, the reluctance of Turkey, and the lack of participation from half of NATO – including most of the newest members from Eastern Europe – were conspicuous. For Germany, taking action in Libya was likely a question of domestic politics, as Merkel was hesitant to commit German forces

to a potentially divisive operation ahead of important regional elections in late March, and she simply had no incentive to join afterward.<sup>171</sup> For other members, it was a matter of not having the air and naval capabilities necessary to participate. The mission also exacerbated structural problems confronting European militaries stretched thin by deployments to the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan (where all twenty-eight members have forces) and shrinking defense budgets. Although most European militaries are customarily underfunded and only five members meet NATO's agreed-upon two percent of GDP spending on defense, recent austerity measures sapped their capabilities even further in recent years.

There was also a lack of political will to get involved in the conflict. At the outset the stakes in Libya appeared low. No vital national security interests were on the line, and the mission was relatively straightforward. Only a handful of warships and aircraft were needed to enforce the arms embargo and the no-fly zone, after the Libyan air force and air defenses were largely destroyed during Odyssey Dawn. The bombing campaign, however, required a considerably larger commitment of assets, including attack aircraft; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft and equipment; and support and logistical capabilities that only the United States possessed in full. Many countries were unable or reluctant to take on the controversial portion of the mission, and even the United States withdrew its combat aircraft from the bombing campaign in early April. Britain and France pressed the United States to recommit its combat aircraft. The Obama administration, seeking to limit the scope of U.S. involvement, refused French requests to rejoin the bombing campaign. U.S. officials argued that Libya was a "European problem" because of Libya's history with and proximity to Europe and because Britain and France had pushed hardest for the intervention.<sup>172</sup>

The United States, despite withholding its combat aircraft, continued to play a key role in Operation Unified Protector by providing approximately forty aircraft. U.S. participation was largely limited to a support role, providing electronic warfare, aerial refueling, search

and rescue, and other logistical capabilities. Although U.S. warplanes had been withdrawn from participation in the bombing campaign, they continued to conduct occasional airstrikes to suppress regime air defenses as part of the no-fly zone, conducting about sixty strikes between April and June.<sup>173</sup> U.S. aircraft provided nearly 70 percent of the alliance's intelligence capabilities and most of its aerial refueling assets.<sup>174</sup> According to a White House report from June 2011, "If the United States military were to cease its participation in the NATO operation, it would seriously degrade the coalition's ability to execute and sustain its operation ... which in turn would likely lead to the withdrawal of other NATO and coalition nation participation in the operation."<sup>175</sup>

U.S. logistical support was especially valuable in providing refueling capabilities. NATO faced the logistical challenge of basing strike aircraft on bases in southern Europe without enough tanker aircraft to maintain the desired operational tempo. The United States, which had already contributed the most tankers to the operation, helped solve this problem by dispatching additional tanker aircraft. The United States deployed a total of twenty-five tanker aircraft to Unified Protector, far more than any other member of the alliance. France deployed three tankers, while Britain, Canada, Italy, and Spain each provided two, and Turkey contributed one.

Sweden, not a member of NATO but participating in the operation, deployed one.<sup>176</sup>

However, the drawdown of U.S. combat aircraft in Libya left the alliance with considerable gaps in its capabilities that would continuously challenge the NATO mission. Without U.S. warplanes, the alliance's ability to continue the bombing campaign at the pace set during Odyssey Dawn appeared to be hampered for the first several days of Unified Protector. U.S. targeting specialists had to be rushed to the NATO air operations center in Italy.<sup>177</sup> Forty U.S. aircraft, including prized ground attack aircraft like the A-10 Thunderbolt and AC-130 gunship, were placed on reserve in case NATO commanders requested them. No other ally had similar ground attack capabilities, but "official" requests were not forthcoming.

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The inability of NATO to conduct a prolonged aerial bombing campaign absent U.S. combat assets was best demonstrated when European strike aircraft ran short of bombs with which to strike Qaddafi's forces. News reports emerged in mid-April that the smaller European allies were running short of precision bombs and that the current operational tempo could not be sustained.<sup>178</sup> In early June, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, criticized the fact that many allies were beginning to run short of munitions."<sup>179</sup>

It is likely that the shortage of these weapons contributed to the French and British governments' decision to deploy attack helicopters to Libya in May. These aircraft carry different weapons than the ones in short supply on NATO warplanes and may have been deployed to fill in for the jet-based attacks limited by the dwindling number of air-to-ground missiles. On May 23, the French newspaper *Le Figaro* reported that attack helicopters would soon be deployed to Libya. Later that day, French Defense Minister Longuet confirmed the report and announced Britain would also send helicopters. British military officials claimed no such decision had been made; Longuet's public announcement apparently came before the move was approved at the UK's ministerial level. British officials eventually decided in favor of the helicopter deployment and Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard announced the following day that the helicopters would be under NATO command.<sup>180</sup>

Sixteen attack helicopters were deployed to Libya, a total of four British helicopters and twelve French helicopters.<sup>181</sup> The British helicopters were U.S.-made Apaches, based out of Wattisham and part of the Army Air Corps.<sup>182</sup> These helicopters were conducting exercises in the Mediterranean Sea aboard the HMS *Ocean* before they were diverted to Libya. The French helicopters, consisting of both the older Gazelle and more modern Tigre, were aboard the amphibious assault vessel the BCP *Tonnerre*. The helicopters were initially deployed to Brega on June 4 and in the area around Misrata on June 9 with the stated objective of striking the regime's ground forces and other targets that are difficult for high-flying jets to identify and engage accurately.<sup>183</sup> The stated rationale for the helicopters' introduction was to strike loyalist ground forces that NATO jets had trouble engaging; the jets flew too high and fast to positively identify more hidden targets and risked killing civilians when targeting regime forces that were increasingly positioned in or around population centers.<sup>184</sup> Helicopters fly close to

the ground and carry weapons with smaller payloads, effectively compensating for the problems facing the jets.

There were other examples of apparent escalations where NATO aircraft struggled to affect change on the ground while not overtly deepening their involvement. In late April, NATO announced it was intensifying its airstrikes and aggressively targeting the regime's command and control capability.<sup>185</sup> Subsequent strikes against Tripoli, particularly Qaddafi's Bab al-Aziziya compound, led to criticisms that NATO was overstepping its mandate and attempting to assassinate Qaddafi. On April 30, an airstrike on a residence in Tripoli reportedly killed Saif al-Arab Qaddafi, Qaddafi's youngest son, and three of the leader's grandchildren. The Libyan government claimed that Qaddafi and his wife were also in the residence at the time of the airstrike, but they escaped unharmed. NATO neither confirmed nor denied Saif al-Arab's death. The alliance suggested the compound had been under surveillance for several days after it intercepted high-level signals communications that indicated it was a command and control site, but it did not know whether Qaddafi or his family were inside. Between March 31 and August 11, NATO struck approximately 384 targets in Tripoli, far more than anywhere else in the country, despite the fact that there was no active fighting and no immediate threat to civilians in the capital.<sup>186</sup>

The intensified airstrikes were just one of several modest escalatory measures NATO participants undertook. In mid-April, Britain, France, and Italy deployed a handful of military advisers to assist the rebels in organizing their forces. The United States followed that escalation by dispatching two armed Predator drones to Libya on April 22, supplementing the already considerable level of U.S. logistical and intelligence air support that underpinned the NATO operation. The Predators were initially sent to Misrata to improve targeting while limiting civilian casualties; the drones could hover above the battlefield for hours at a time and would be able to better identify where regime forces and civilians were positioned. Several days after the Predators' introduction, Italy announced it would lift its caveat barring its warplanes from conducting airstrikes following intense pressure from France and the United States.<sup>187</sup> While these steps were largely taken to smooth political tensions within the alliance and were less indicative of a significant military escalation, they generated fears of "mission creep" among allies who were growing wary of making further commitments in Libya.

Though domestic and international political considerations limited the extent of support that NATO participants could provide to the rebels, one non-NATO member of the coalition took it upon itself to support the opposition in much bolder ways. The small state of Qatar provided overt political, economic, and military assistance to the NTC through the NATO mission, as well as more clandestine efforts to strengthen the opposition movement. The small oil-producing state was the first Arab state and second country overall (after France) to officially recognize the NTC, awarding diplomatic recognition on March 28.<sup>188</sup> Qatar was also an active participant within the Libya Contact Group and at the forefront of its creation along with France in late March. Qatar hosted the first meeting of the group in Doha and made the single largest monetary pledge to the NTC, offering \$400 to \$500 million that the rebels could spend as needed.<sup>189</sup>

The rationale behind Qatar's consistent support was partly its close security ties with the United States and France – both nations had been the driving force behind the intervention, albeit at different points. Qatar signed a defense cooperation agreement with France in 1994, and its military is equipped in large part by the French.<sup>190</sup> The relationship between Qatar and United States is also built upon bilateral security ties dating back to a similar defense agreement signed in 1992.<sup>191</sup> The Arab nation hosts several U.S. military facilities, including CENTCOM's Forward Headquarters and a key airbase used to support U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup>

Qatar's financial support was critical to the rebels. In early April, the NTC and the state-owned Qatar International Petroleum Marketing Company agreed the latter would ship and market one million barrels of oil on the opposition's behalf.<sup>193</sup> The oil deal, valued around \$100 million dollars, provided key funding to the opposition movement at a point when the international coalition supporting the intervention had not yet formalized mechanisms to provide financial support to the rebels.<sup>194</sup>

There have been reports throughout the conflict that the NTC struggled to pay government and military salaries and cover the costs of the conflict, and in turn pressed the international coalition for money and access to Qaddafi's frozen financial assets.<sup>195</sup> The economic crisis was not surprising; an overwhelming percentage of jobs

in the Libyan economy were underwritten by the central government, which in turn received its money from oil production. In addition to being cut off from the regime's largesse, the rebels were unable to financially sustain themselves as the fighting brought oil production to a halt.<sup>196</sup> Qatar even made efforts to alleviate the fuel shortages throughout the east efforts, shipping gasoline, diesel, and propane to Benghazi to supply the rebels.<sup>197</sup>

Qatari military assistance to the opposition came in the form of official participation in the initial American-led intervention and the subsequent NATO mission, in addition to more clandestine support. Six Qatari Mirage fighter jets (a large portion of the country's small operational air force) were deployed to participate in the no-fly zone as part of Operation Unified Protector in late March.<sup>198</sup>

## V. CONCLUSION

While the international intervention in Libya succeeded in preventing the rebels from falling to Qaddafi's forces in the spring of 2011, it by no means brought about a quick end to the conflict. The conflict continued for months as fighting in Cyrenaica stalemated and the rebel-held enclave of Misrata in western Libya faced a weeks-long siege by Qaddafi's forces. NATO played a pivotal role in preventing Misrata's fall to the regime as well as strengthening the rebels' hold over eastern Libya. Yet, the alliance continued to be plagued by internal divisions that heightened as the conflict dragged on into the late summer and the outcome of the intervention remained uncertain.

*This series continues with Part Three: Stalemate and Siege, which details the ebb of fighting in eastern Libya, the extensive efforts to break the siege during the pinnacle battle of Misrata.*

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<sup>2</sup>Henry Chu, “Britain, Italy criticized for Libya business deals,” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 2011.

<sup>3</sup>Mary Beth Sheridan and Scott Wilson, “Administration Lacks Leverage It Has Elsewhere In Region,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 2011.

<sup>4</sup>Julian E. Barnes, “Military Ties Are Key,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 7, 2011. “The ties that bind,” *The Economist*, February 24, 2011. David E. Sanger, “Obama Presses Egypt’s Military on Democracy,” *The New York Times*, February 11, 2011. Scott Shane and David D. Kirkpatrick, “Military Caught between Mubarak and Protesters,” *The New York Times*, February 10, 2011. Elisabeth Bumiller, “Egypt Stability Hinges on a Divided Military,” *The New York Times*, February 5, 2011. Elisabeth Bumiller, “Pentagon Places Its Bet on a General in Egypt,” *The New York Times*, March 10, 2011.

<sup>5</sup>Mary Beth Sheridan and Scott Wilson, “Administration Lacks Leverage It Has Elsewhere In Region,” *Washington Post*, February 22, 2011.

<sup>6</sup>“Obama and Cameron mull Libya measures,” *Agence France Presse*, February 24, 2011.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Chu, “Britain, Italy condemned for Libya ties,” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 2011.

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<sup>88</sup>Libya was suspended from the Arab League on February 22, 2011. A Libyan delegation did attempt to attend the Arab League meeting on March 12 but was denied. According to the Congressional Research Service, Algeria informed CRS that it did not oppose the Arab League's decision contrary to press accounts, and may have been an abstention. Blanchard, Christopher M. *Libya: Unrest and U.S. Policy* (RL33142, March 29, 2011), Congressional Research Service, 14.

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<sup>125</sup>"Paris Summit for the Support to the Libyan People: Communiqué," March 19, 2011. Available at: [http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank\\_objects/11-03-1-Paris\\_Summit\\_for\\_the\\_support\\_to\\_the\\_Libyan\\_people.pdf](http://www.elysee.fr/president/root/bank_objects/11-03-1-Paris_Summit_for_the_support_to_the_Libyan_people.pdf)

<sup>126</sup>"Libye: point de situation opération Harmattan n1," Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combattants, March 25, 2011. "Opération Harmattan, le nom de code militaire pour la Libye," Marianne 2, March 19, 2011. "Libya: point de situation opération Harmattan n2," Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combattants, March 25, 2011.

<sup>127</sup>The French warplanes were support by an E-3F AWACS and six C-135 tankers.

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<sup>129</sup>"DOD News Briefing with Vice Adm. Gortney from the Pentagon on Libya Operation Odyssey Dawn," U.S. Department of Defense, March 19, 2011.

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<sup>141</sup>John A. Tirpak, "Bombers Over Libya," *Airforce-Magazine*, July 2011.

<sup>142</sup>"DOD Briefing with Admiral Locklear," March 22, 2011.

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<sup>144</sup>"DOD News Briefing with Rear Adm. Hueber via Telephone from USS Mount Whitney," U.S. Department of Defense, March 23, 2011.

<sup>145</sup>The attacks were supported by a U.S. EA-18G Growler, which had been re-tasked from duties over Iraq, provided electronic warfare support. Jim Garamone, "Roughead: Ships Were Ready for Odyssey Dawn," U.S. Africa Command, March 24, 2011. "DOD News Briefing with Vice Adm. Gortney from the Pentagon on

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