

[A victory, but at what price?](http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/victory+what+price/6178774/story.html)

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• A victory, but at what price?

After Moammar Gadhafi's death, NATO saw its victory as complete. But as David Pugliese writes in the last of a three-part series, Libya's new leaders are struggling to gain control and al-Qaeda has benefitted from the power vacuum

By David Pugliese, Ottawa Citizen February 20, 2012

- - Story
 - Photos (1)



Prime Minister Stephen Harper congratulates Canadian Forces Lt.-Gen. Charles Bouchard after he was awarded the Meritorious Service Cross for serving in the NATO-led Libya mission during a ceremony on Parliament Hill last November.

Photograph by: Dave Chan, Reuters , Ottawa Citizen

- The death of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi on Oct. 20 was greeted with relief in the capital cities of NATO nations. His demise meant the war was all but over. In Ottawa, officials in the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office went to work planning the largest military victory parade the country had seen in decades. The Conservative government wanted a major event: a flypast of CF-18 fighter jets and other aircraft, a parade, a choir and a feting of hundreds military personnel in the Senate chambers. The emphasis was on portraying all those who had taken part in the Libyan mission - from cooks to clerks to pilots and aircrew - as "heroes." The PR campaign started with a press release issued Nov. 4 by the office of Defence Minister Peter MacKay, calling on Canadians to welcome their "military heroes" back from the war's staging base in Italy. But even before Gadhafi's death, the government had carefully crafted strategic messages to be used by military officers and politicians in public and with the media when victory came in Libya. The main one was that Canada had taken a leading role in the NATO campaign and had "punched above its weight."
- MacKay was the first to use the phrase, which was soon parroted by generals and defence analysts. Politicians in other nations also started using the term. Norway and Denmark punched above their weight in the war, U.S. officials said. British Prime Minister David Cameron declared Britain's military had also "punched above its weight." NATO saw its victory as complete: 260 aircraft had flown more than 26,000 missions. Almost 6,000 targets, including tanks and other armoured vehicles, were destroyed. More than 200 cruise missiles were fired and 20,000 bombs dropped. Canadian CF-18s flew 946 sorties and dropped almost 700 bombs. Libya's air force was almost entirely destroyed in the opening days of the war. More than 400 government buildings or command centres were attacked.
- With all the self-congratulation about victory in Libya, few in the Canadian government or military pointed out the obvious - that the thirddrate army of an African state, outfitted with aging equipment, had somehow managed to withstand the full force of some of the largest militaries in the world and hang on for more than 200 days.
- As part of their PR campaign, government ministers also focused on Lt.-Gen. Charles Bouchard, whom they dubbed the "hero" of the Libyan war. The general would receive the Meritorious Service Cross, an honour military officers say usually takes quite a while to work its way through the bureaucracy before it's approved. In this case, the award was fast-tracked. U.S. politicians were also full of praise for Bouchard's performance. "He was tough, he was able, he took no prisoners," U.S. Defence Secretary Leon Panetta said in lauding the general's efforts. But not everyone was enamoured with a 'take no prisoners' approach to warfare.

- There were growing questions about the number of civilian deaths caused by NATO airstrikes and the lack of answers from the alliance. Antiwar groups claimed thousands might have been killed and that the alliance had committed war crimes.

A committee of British MPs tried to determine how many civilians NATO killed, but would acknowledge in a report there was no way of knowing. They accepted, however, that coalition forces did their best to avoid such casualties and commended them for that.

Libyan government officials said such casualties were unfortunate, but in the grander scheme of things, they were inevitable. They pointed out Gadhafi's forces killed thousands of people during the civil war.

Bouchard, who approved each and every airstrike, said NATO's process was extremely rigorous and geared to substantially reduce civilian deaths.

- One investigation by the New York Times newspaper found that NATO bombs killed as many as 70 civilians during the conflict, including 29 women and children. Survivors told the Times that one tactic used by NATO was to restrike targets minutes after the first attack, a practice that killed civilians rushing to aid the wounded.

NATO said it didn't have any figures about such fatalities, but critics countered that the alliance never tried to compile any.

One of the most controversial NATO attacks happened in August in the farming community of Majar. Five women and seven children were killed in the initial attack. Minutes later, NATO aircraft were back dropping bombs, killing four more. When neighbours rushed to help dig people from the rubble, another bomb hit, killing 18 more civilians.

- At the time, Gadhafi's government claimed 85 died, but that was dismissed as propaganda. Libya's new government now acknowledges around 34 civilians were killed.

But NATO still insists it had carefully planned out the airstrike and the dead were Libyan military personnel and mercenaries.

Back in Canada, there was disquiet as well, but for other reasons. Among some in uniform, the Conservative government's decision to honour the Libyan war didn't sit well.

A large number of Canadian military personnel had lost friends or acquaintances in the decade-long conflict in Afghanistan. Much blood and treasure had been spent, with 158 Canadians dead and almost 2,000 injured. More than 30,000 Canadian military personnel had served at some point in Afghanistan.

- But a similar ceremony to honour Canadian troops who fought in that country, complete with a parade on Parliament Hill and a flyover, had been scuttled.

It seemed to some military personnel the Afghan war was an embarrassment to the Conservative government.

Now, all the stops were being pulled out for a war where aircrew flew their missions before returning to a comfortable room and meal at night. No Canadian troops fought in the deserts of Libya. There were no casualties. Pilots at times faced gunfire, but most of Libya's air defences were destroyed in the opening days of the conflict. The war was, as some pilots suggested, a turkey shoot.

But Libya was different in other respects. Unlike Afghanistan, it was a military action that had a clear beginning and end and what the government considered a victory.

- The celebration that had been set for Nov. 24 on Parliament Hill would be televised nationally; some 300 military personnel were brought in from four bases across the country for the event.

The four-minute flight of CF-18s and other aircraft over Parliament Hill cost taxpayers an estimated \$850,000, although the Defence Department has not yet tallied the entire cost of the celebrations.

But the public appeared largely indifferent. The event attracted only a couple of dozen Libyan-Canadians who waved flags as cannons sounded a 21-gun salute.

"History shows us this: that freedom seldom flowers in undisturbed ground," Harper told the assembled military personnel at the time. "Our job in Libya has been done and done well."

That, however, was open to debate.

- While the Canadian government celebrated Gadhafi's overthrow, the countries in the region were feeling the effects.

The Libyan strongman had not only provided aid for many African nations, but employment for their citizens. His demise set into motion a mass exodus of workers back to their original countries.

That, in turn, created a domino effect as those nations struggled to deal with hundreds of thousands of traumatized and impoverished people, according to a recently released UN report for the Security Council.

Crime and drug and human smuggling have spiked in the region and the return of more than one million people to their homelands has worsened an "already challenging, humanitarian, development and security situation," the report noted.

- But Gadhafi's overthrow did breathe new life into one organization - al-Qaeda.

As Gadhafi's forces retreated from NATO's relentless air attacks they abandoned bases and ammunition depots holding thousands of weapons, including surface-to-air missiles. In the chaos that engulfed Libya, the sites were quickly pilfered, either by rebels or black marketers.

African nations were the first to sound the warning. In late March, just weeks into the conflict, Chad's president, Idriss Deby Itno, told journalists that al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM as it is known, had obtained missiles and small arms from abandoned Libyan stockpiles. "This is very serious," he said. "AQIM is becoming a genuine army, the best equipped in the region."

- Canada was slow to recognize the problem. In April, Canadian Forces spokesman Brig.-Gen. Richard Blanchette said the military didn't have any information about missing armaments or missiles.

But a month later, Algerian intelligence was also warning that looted Libyan weapons were in the hands of AQIM.

"The region has turned into a powder keg," Mohamed Bazoum, Niger's foreign minister, would later tell delegates to an anti-terrorism conference. "Things have changed and degraded since the Libya crisis and the region is on a war path. With stolen weapons circulating, al-Qaeda's total impact is growing."

In November, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, one of AQIM's leaders, confirmed to the Mauritanian news agency that the terrorist group had acquired Libyan weapons. "We have been one of the main beneficiaries of the revolutions of the Arab world," he boasted.

- And in Libya, the war was over, but the fighting went on. The country's new leaders were dealing with their own problems as rebel groups, representing various factions, started to fight each other for control of the country. In Tripoli, rival groups fought gun battles over control of the city's sports complex and airport.

"I want to assure the Libyan people that everything is under control," a Libyan senior official, Mustafa Abdel Jalil, said after one four-day battle on the outskirts of the capital.

But the militias, estimated to number between 100 and 300 groups, aren't hearing the message.

- Tripoli residents have seen a different face of the rebellion than the one presented to the western media. Rebels have stopped people at gunpoint and stolen their vehicles. Other militia groups have taken over homes and buildings, evicting families and businesses. The militia from Zintan stole an elephant from Tripoli's zoo, taking the animal back to their city as a war trophy.

The militias refuse to disarm and clashes continue. It's estimated that around 125,000 Libyans have retained their weapons.

A recent report from the International Crisis Group pointed to one of the key problems: Libyans had rejected the National Transitional Council. The group that the Canadian government recognized as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people, long before Gadhafi's regime fell, actually had little real power.

Although the NTC was the face of the uprising for western politicians and the media, those from the western part of the country saw it as dominated by militia groups from the east. For their part, Islamists saw the transitional council as overly secular, too geared to western values and out of touch with ordinary Libyans, according to the report.

- There was also bad blood between a number of towns and cities and the NTC. Militias in Misrata complained they received little support from rebels in Benghazi and that the NTC had made them pay for weapons at the height of the civil war.

Equally troubling for countries that supported the rebels was the ongoing widespread detention of individuals and the use of torture in the new Libya.

An estimated 8,500 men, women and children are still being held in detention centres run by various militias. Navi Pillay, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, reported that the detainees were being tortured and that both male and female prisoners were being raped.

In January, Médecins sans Frontières pulled its medical staff from detention facilities in Misrata after they determined more than 100 people had been tortured. The group's doctors were being asked to keep prisoners alive so they could be tortured again.

- Around the same time, Amnesty International reported that up to a dozen people had been tortured to death by Libya's new National Military Security agency.

In early February came the news that Libya's former ambassador to France, Omar Brebesh, had been killed shortly after being arrested by a militia group. According to the autopsy, he died after suffering "multiple bodily injuries and fractured ribs."

Such cases prompted Canada's Foreign Affairs Department to deliver a diplomatic note rebuking Libya for allowing such activities to take place.

But Libyan officials dismissed allegations of torture as unfounded. The head of Misrata's military council, Ibrahim Beitelmal, instead claimed that human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Médecins sans Frontières were part of "Gadhafi's fifth column."

- Still, Canada's Lt.-Gen. Bouchard remains optimistic about Libya's future. He argues that the country is in a good position to bounce back and become prosperous again. "I believe once we get there, mixed with a government that is transparent and representative, we will find our way toward a Libyan democracy," he recently told a Canadian senate meeting.

Asked by senators about the torture and the concerns raised by Médecins sans Frontières and other agencies, Bouchard said the Libyans needed to understand that such things were not right.

"I would offer that this is an emerging democracy by people who may not know all the things that need to be done and who may not understand all the human rights issues," he added.

- Some are not so sure Libya is an emerging democracy. They point to the country's warm welcome in January of Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of genocide and war crimes, was offering Tripoli the use of his military to help create a new Libyan army.

This was the same military Bashir used to ethnically cleanse Darfur. Ironically, the International Criminal Court had sought to try Gadhafi for similar war crimes.

- But Bashir felt at home in Tripoli. Asked by journalists if he was worried he might be arrested and handed over to the international court, he answered: "By God, No."

He said he felt absolutely safe in the new Libya.

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Syria's crisis is leading us to unlikely bedfellows - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9090324/Syrias-crisis-is-leading-us-to-unlikely-bedfellows.html>

• Syria's crisis is leading us to unlikely bedfellows

David Cameron and William Hague are at risk of over-simplifying a dangerous and complex situation.

- When two car bombings killed nearly 50 people in the heart of the Syrian capital of Damascus just before Christmas, we in the West were quick to challenge claims made on state TV that the atrocities had been carried out by al-Qaeda. We were inclined to award more credibility to the Syrian rebels, who denied that the terror group was involved at all, and insisted that the attacks had been cynically staged by the government, perhaps as a bid for international sympathy.

However, all doubt ended last week when James Clapper, director of US national intelligence, informed the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Damascus bombings "had all the earmarks of an al-Qaeda attack". Mr Clapper added that "we believe al-Qaeda in Iraq is extending its reach into Syria". So, it's official. Al-Qaeda is acknowledged as an ally of Britain and America in our desire to overturn the Syrian government.

Think about it. Ten years ago, in the wake of the destruction of the Twin Towers, we invaded Afghanistan to eliminate al-Qaeda. Now the world's most notorious terror organisation wants to join a new "coalition of the willing" in Syria (not just al-Qaeda: yesterday the Muslim group Hizb ut-Tahrir staged a march through west London in support of their Syrian brothers and the establishment of the Khilafah state).

- This may be the most profound turnaround in global politics since the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939 converted Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany from bitter enemies into allies – and it is important to understand that the affinity of interests between al-Qaeda and the West extends far beyond Syria. Britain, the United States and al-Qaeda also have a deep, structural hostility to President Assad's biggest sponsor, Iran.

Like al-Qaeda, we are interested in undermining Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in the Lebanon. In Libya, David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy threw their weight behind the destruction of Gaddafi's government and its replacement by a new regime which reportedly embraces al-Qaeda-connected figures. We and the terror group have come to share the same hostility to the Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, and for very much the same reason: we both agree that he takes his orders from Tehran.

- Of course, it remains the case that we have different methods and contrasting ideals. But we share unnervingly similar short-term objectives. Although it is unlikely that Britain and America have significant direct dealings with al-Qaeda, it may be that some of our allies do.

Let's consider for a moment one of the most glaring hypocrisies of American foreign policy: the differential treatment between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Washington never ceases to complain about the connection between the Pakistani intelligence services and the Taliban. But we never hear a whisper of concerns about the connection between Saudi intelligence and Salafi movements across the Middle East, of which al-Qaeda is the best known offshoot.

- For months, the region has been alive with rumours that al-Qaeda and other Sunni fighters have been sneaking into Syria through Lebanon and Turkey. Many of these extremist Sunni infiltrators fought with al-Qaeda in Iraq before being driven out and taking refuge in the Lebanon. It is likely that they are backed with money and arms by Saudi interests, and inconceivable that they could act without the knowledge, and perhaps the assistance, of Saudi intelligence.

So what has brought al-Qaeda in from the cold? The answer lies in the Arab Spring. Certainly the revolutions in Libya, Tunisia and elsewhere started out as popular uprisings; many of the rebels in Syria continue to fight, and often die, for human rights and democracy. But, as time has gone by, other agendas are coming into play, and other interests have sought to assert themselves. The statecraft of Saudi Arabia demonstrates how complex the situation has become. The gerontocracy which governs that desert kingdom will never countenance internal opposition. Indeed, Saudi troops marched into Bahrain to suppress the democracy movement there. On the other hand, the Saudis backed the Libyan rebels and are reportedly active in the destabilisation of President Assad.

- This deeply reactionary monarchy remains Britain and America's closest ally in the Middle East. As the Arab Spring has unfolded, we have encouraged the Saudis to develop a makeshift alliance that embraces Qatar, Jordan, the Israelis, al-Qaeda and, it would seem, elements of the Muslim Brotherhood, who have very strong historical reasons for wishing to dislodge the Assad regime, in the light of its brutal crushing of the Brotherhood-inspired revolt in Hama

30 years ago. All members of this alliance would agree that they want the Shiite-Allawi regime in Syria to be replaced by some form of majority Sunni rule. Britain and America hope this would be democratic; doubtless al-Qaeda and its Saudi allies have something else in mind. Ranged on the other side are Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas and Iraq's al-Maliki government. In Iraq, many of the Awakening Councils (the militia set up by the US six years ago to defeat al-Qaeda) now feel betrayed and are said to have joined forces again with their Sunni brethren.

The situation could hardly be more dangerous or more complex. Yet, in recent public pronouncements David Cameron has repeatedly spoken of the conflict in Syria as a struggle between an illegal and autocratic regime at war with what he likes to call "the people". Either he is poorly briefed, or he is coming dangerously close to a calculated deception of the British public. For the situation is far more complicated than he has admitted. It is far from obvious, for example, even that a majority of Syrians are opposed to the Assad regime. Russia calculates that perhaps two thirds of Syrians are still broadly supportive, and it is worth recalling that Russia was a more accurate source of information in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq than either Britain or the US.

- Foreign policy is perhaps the area where David Cameron's Government has copied New Labour most closely. Mr Cameron shares much of Tony Blair's slavish adherence to American foreign policy aims, especially in the Middle East. Like Mr Blair, he wilfully simplifies intractable foreign policy decisions and has shown a fondness for overseas adventures. In Syria, British rhetoric may raise expectations among the opposition which we can never satisfy.

Meanwhile, in Libya there are menacing signs that last year's Anglo-French intervention is starting to go wrong. The toppling of the Gaddafi regime has not brought an end to the killing. If anything, the fighting appears to be getting worse, as the country breaks into hostile armed fractions – a fertile hunting ground for al-Qaeda, our latest collaborator in the war on terror. I hope that the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary, William Hague, know what they are doing as they allow Britain to be dragged closer towards further intervention in the Middle East. But judging from their public remarks they may be playing a game whose rules they do not fully understand.

[Algeria seizes missiles smuggled from Libya | Firstpost](http://www.firstpost.com/fwire/algeria-seizes-missiles-smuggled-from-libya-217868.html)

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• Algeria seizes missiles smuggled from Libya

— Feb 19, 2012

- **Algiers:** Algerian security forces have found a large cache of weapons, including shoulder-fired missiles, which they believe were smuggled in from neighbouring Libya, a security source briefed on the discovery told Reuters on Saturday.

The find follows warnings from governments in the region that instability in Libya after the end of Muammar Gaddafi's rule is allowing weapons taken from Gaddafi's [arsenal](#) to fall into the hands of al Qaeda's north African branch and other insurgent groups across the Sahara desert.

- The weapons cache was discovered in the desert about 60 km (40 miles) south of In Amenas, an energy-producing Algerian region near the border with Libya, said the source, who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity.

The source said the cache was located following a tip-off from a smuggler who had been arrested. He said it contained a "large quantity" of arms including the shoulder-launched missiles – a weapon which, in some variations, could be used to bring down an aircraft.

- "This weapons seizure shows that the chaos in Libya is dangerous for the whole region," the source said.

There was no official confirmation of the discovery from the Algerian government and there was no way of independently verifying the source's account.

Western security experts tracking arms which have disappeared from Gaddafi's looted arms depots say the shoulder-fired missiles – also known as man-portable air defence systems, or MANPADS – are one of their biggest concerns because they could be used with relative ease by insurgent groups.

• INSURGENCY

Gaddafi's forces had about 20,000 of the missiles, according to a U.S. government task force which is trying to locate the missiles. The task force says most of the missiles are still inside Libya, in the hands of militias loosely allied to the interim leadership that took over after Gaddafi's rule was overthrown last year.

Security officials in North Africa say the worst-case scenario is that al Qaeda's north African wing, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), could use one of the missiles to bring down a commercial airliner coming in to land or taking off at an airport somewhere in North Africa.

The group is waging a long-running insurgency against Algeria's government. It also carries out kidnappings, ambushes and bomb attacks on Western targets in the Sahel, a huge volatile band that straddles the borders of Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

- Speaking in Geneva last week, a U.N. panel of experts on Libya said the lack of strong central government control in Libya was making it difficult to track down the missing MANPADS.

"People are concerned and they are right," said one panel member, on condition of anonymity. "There is certainly weapons traffic into the Sahel. It is a large desert area with limited (border) controls."

- Algeria has been one of the region's most vocal states in warning of the security impact of Gaddafi's fall. The revolt has left huge quantities of weapons unsecured and a fragile interim government that is struggling to impose its authority and control the country's borders.
- However, Libyan officials say they are working to secure the missing weapons and have accused Algeria of exaggerating the threat.

They say its neighbour was against the revolt in Libya and is now using the security issue to undermine the new leadership in Tripoli, allegations that Algerian officials deny.

Reuters

[Into the unknown](http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Into+unknown/6173271/story.html)

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• Into the unknown

By David Pugliese, Ottawa Citizen February 18, 2012

- - Story
 - Photos (2)



On October, Foreign Minister John Baird toured the former fortified compound of Moammar Gadhafi in Tripoli, the first visit by a foreign minister to the compound since it was seized by Libya's rebel forces.

Photograph by: Sean Kilpatrick, Reuters , Ottawa Citizen

- When the Libyan people rose up against Moammar Gadhafi one year ago this week, his regime's retaliation was immediate, and brutal. The world reacted almost as swiftly. Western leaders lined up to condemn the colonel they had once wooed and backed the rebels with warm words of support and relentless airstrikes. In Part 1 of a three-part series, David Pugliese looks at why we went to war - and what was missed in the rush to act.
- Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird beamed with pride last summer as he signed a Canadian bomb that would soon be dropped on Libya. "Free Libya. Democracy," he wrote on the weapon.

Baird was on a trip to visit Canadian aircrews in Italy as well as the leaders of Libya's rebel forces, his first major international visit in the Foreign Affairs portfolio. He returned to Ottawa full of praise for both.

Canada, he pointed out, was at the forefront of the NATO mission in Libya. As for the rebel leaders, the minister said, they were just ordinary people - doctors, engineers and parents - trying to overthrow Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi.

In Gadhafi's place would come democracy, the rebels had assured Baird. "I can honestly say their courage and their resolve are remarkable," he wrote in the Citizen in July.

- Defence and political analysts, media commentators and newspaper editorialists have portrayed Canada's military intervention in Libya as a great victory. Canadian Lt.-Gen. Charles Bouchard, who led the NATO mission, has been hailed as a hero.

But almost a year after Canada went to war to bring what it called freedom and democracy to Libya, the African nation

is in a state of turmoil.

- The National Transitional Council that Baird praised at the true representative of the Libyan people is ignored in many areas of the country. Gun battles have broken out as rebel fighters carve out pieces of land for their own tribes or organizations.
- The rebels, who would not have come to power if it weren't for NATO's bombing, and who once complained about the brutality of Gadhafi's regime, are now themselves brutalizing others.
- Prisoners - more than 8,000 men, women and children were thrown behind bars by the victorious forces - are being tortured and killed.

Last month Médecins Sans Frontières pulled its staff out of prisons in Misrata after they were told to provide medical aid to prisoners so they could be tortured again. This week, Amnesty International reported it had documented the torturekillings of at least 12 detainees held by rebel militias.

Human rights agencies have gathered evidence about the ethnic cleansing by anti-Gadhafi forces of towns populated by black Libyans and African workers.

- Months after the fighting stopped, new questions are being raised about Libya's future. It is becoming evident that the coming years will test Baird's earlier boast about the rebels: "The one thing we can say categorically is that they couldn't be any worse than Col. Gadhafi."
- From the day Gadhafi seized power in a 1969 coup, he was a thorn in the side of western nations.

He forced petroleum companies to pay higher royalties on Libyan oil, bringing billions more into the country's coffers. And while Gadhafi and his supporters ensured they had more than their share of that wealth, living a lavish lifestyle, the colonel also used the oil revenue to significantly improve Libyans' lives.

When he seized power, life expectancy was 51 years. Under his regime it increased to 74. Literacy grew to 95 per cent for men, 78 per cent for women, and the per capita income increased to \$16,300.

- But like many Arab and African leaders, Gadhafi ruled the country of six million with an iron fist. His secret police arrested and tortured dissidents. In the 1970s and '80s his regime conducted show trials and televised executions. His forces brutally put down an uprising at a Tripoli prison in 1996, killing 1,200 political prisoners.

Gadhafi promoted anti-U.S. views, funding a variety of terrorist organizations, from the IRA to guerillas in Colombia. His agents were behind the bombing of a German disco that killed and injured U.S. military personnel and his regime was responsible for the Lockerbie bombing, which killed 270 people. U.S. president Ronald Reagan labelled him a "mad dog."

- But some in Africa had a different view of Gadhafi. He was seen as a leader who stood up to the western colonial powers, demanding they compensate the continent's nations for the raw resources they had extracted over the decades.
- Gadhafi provided hundreds of millions of dollars in aid for countries in the region and campaigned against apartheid in South Africa. He promoted the idea of a United States of Africa, a proposal that would eventually lead to the creation of the African Union.
- Gadhafi had a reputation for eccentric behaviour, but he was a keen tactician who had honed his survival skills over the decades. In the 1990s, he began a campaign to re-establish relations with the U.S. and the West, eventually offering up compensation to families of victims of the Lockerbie bombing and agreeing to dismantle his chemical and nuclear weapons programs.

Western nations welcomed Gadhafi back with few questions asked. They offered to sell him weapons and courted his officials. It didn't hurt that Gadhafi's Libyan Investment Authority had an estimated \$70 billion to spend.

Prince Andrew dined with Gadhafi in November 2008, promoting Britain's oil interests. The British military sent members of its elite Special Air Service to provide training for the dictator's commandos, part of the growing relationship between the two nations.

In April 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warmly greeted one of the colonel's sons during high-level talks in Washington. "We deeply value the relationship between the United States and Libya," she said.

Less than three months later, Gadhafi himself was shaking hands with U.S. President Barack Obama during a G8 summit in Italy.

- Canada also moved to get in on the action. But it already had a head start since Canadian companies had a long history of involvement in Libya, even when Gadhafi was considered an international pariah. Although former diplomats would try to downplay the extent of the relationship once the war against Libya began, an estimated 70 Canadian firms were active in the country, mainly in gas and oil production.

In the late 1980s, Canadian firms, with the backing of the Conservative government, pursued Libyan contracts. In 1989, Calgary-based Husky Oil and its partners spent nearly \$100 million, entering into exploration and production-sharing agreements.

In December 2004, then Liberal prime minister Paul Martin headed a delegation to visit Gadhafi and improve trade.

- By early 2011, Suncor Energy of Calgary had almost \$1 billion in assets tied up in Libya and the Quebec engineering firm SNC Lavalin had won contracts valued at more than \$800 million. SNC, with 2,000 employees in the country, was building a massive pipeline that Gadhafi envisioned would bring water in the south across the desert to cities in the north. It had also been awarded a contract to build a new airport in Benghazi and a \$275-million prison in Tripoli.

Stephen Harper's Conservative government also forged links with the Libyan strongman. The government asked for - and received - the Libyan leader's help in freeing kidnapped Canadian diplomats Robert Fowler and Louis Guay, who had been kidnapped by al-Qaeda's affiliate in northwest Africa in 2008. During a trip to Libya the next year, then-foreign affairs minister Lawrence Cannon thanked the Gadhafi regime for using its extensive intelligence network and connections on the abduction case.

- Cannon had originally intended to give Gadhafi a dressing down over his decision to give a hero's welcome to the Libyan convicted in Lockerbie bombing, but that tough stance quickly evaporated after Libya threatened to shut down oil production by Canadian firms. Instead, Cannon flew to Tripoli to make amends and to remind Gadhafi that Canada was one of his supporters. The Conservatives had stood behind his bid to join the World Trade Organization as well as to get a seat on the International Atomic Energy Agency. In turn, Gadhafi had supported Canada's bid for a UN Security Council seat.

- Equally important for the West was the fact Gadhafi had become a valuable ally in the war on terror.

Canadian Defence Department reports from 2002, 2003, and 2006 obtained by the Citizen outline the extent Gadhafi supported U.S. efforts against al-Qaeda, noting he was the most vocal Arab leader in denouncing terrorism and supporting American retaliation against Islamic extremists.

In addition, Libya supplied intelligence to the U.S. on Islamic extremists as well as al-Qaeda affiliates operating in the Philippines, according to the reports.

As a thank you for Gadhafi's support, the CIA had arranged the 2004 capture in Asia of Abdel Hakim Belhadj, a Libyan terrorist alleged to have ties to al-Qaeda. Belhadj, who would later rise to play a key role in the 2011 rebellion against Gadhafi, was put on one of the CIA's "rendition flights" and turned over to Libya's security agency.

- Gadhafi had his own reasons for cooperating with western intelligence agencies, according to DND's reports. He faced a growing threat from the al-Qaeda-linked Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, or LIFG. Its members had fought in Afghanistan in the 1990s but then turned their attention to their native country. They launched attacks on Libyan security forces and tried twice to assassinate Gadhafi.

Islamists saw the Libyan leader as an infidel for not strictly adhering to the values of Islam. In turn, his regime perceived "radical Islam as its mortal enemy," one of the DND reports pointed out.

The Libyan leader responded to the LIFG threat with a brutal crackdown; his troops conducting attacks throughout the northeast of the country, known as a hotbed of Islamic extremism.

Gadhafi had also had other uprisings to deal with in the northeast; in 1980 he crushed a Libyan army mutiny in Tobruk and in 1993 he faced a similar uprising after soldiers based in Misrata rebelled because their particular tribe was not well represented within the leadership ranks.

Because of that, it came as no surprise to some intelligence analysts that last year's uprising against Gadhafi was centered in the region. Unemployment there was high, and corruption among Libyan officials was rampant.

- The so-called Arab Spring, where demonstrators in nations from Yemen to Egypt took to the streets to demand better living conditions and government, was about to come to Libya.

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Protests spread to several other towns and cities and security forces responded with gunfire, killing demonstrators.

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Around the world, politicians warned Gadhafi not to respond with violence. But the colonel urged supporters to seek out and destroy those who opposed his regime, calling the rebels "rats" and "scum."

Human rights activists warned that Libyan security forces were about to commit genocide and unconfirmed reports would later claim that Gadhafi's air force was being used to strafe and bomb protesters.

- In Canada, Conservative Senator Hugh Segal and Liberal Senator Roméo Dallaire joined forces to call on the government to build a coalition for "rapid engagement" against Libya.

In a Feb. 25 opinion piece in the Citizen, the senators raised the spectre of genocides of previous decades and wrote that Canada had a "responsibility to protect" and stop crimes against humanity. "It's about being on the right side of history by saving human lives," they wrote.

But the situation in Libya was no Rwanda, where hundreds of thousands of unarmed people had been slaughtered. The Libyans fighting against Gadhafi's regime had raided military barracks, and while outgunned, they were armed.

Gen. Abdul Younis, once Gadhafi's close confidant, defected in late February and opened up army installations to the rebels. Younis' defection brought with him a unit of Libyan special forces troops. Mustafa Abdel Jalil, the country's justice minister, defected shortly after. Two weeks later, some 6,000 soldiers switched sides to support the rebels. They were equipped with tanks and anti-aircraft guns.

Only months after NATO went to war against Libya would a clearer picture start to emerge of the uprising, and questions were raised about the veracity of claims made by rebel supporters and western politicians that the Gadhafi regime had engaged in genocide.

- "Much Western media coverage has from the outset presented a very one-sided view of the logic of events, portraying the protest movement as entirely peaceful and repeatedly suggesting that the regime's security forces were unaccountably massacring unarmed demonstrators who presented no security challenge," noted a June 2011 report produced by the International Crisis Group.

The report from the group, headed by Canadian Louise Arbour, the former UN high commissioner for human rights, noted that while Gadhafi's forces reacted brutally, "there are grounds for questioning the more sensational reports that the regime was using its air force to slaughter demonstrators, let alone engaging in anything remotely warranting use of the term 'genocide.' "

- By early March a number of cities were controlled by rebel forces, which had also scored some successes by shooting down government aircraft.

Still, some troops defecting to the rebel side were not sure how far they wanted to take the rebellion. Maj. Ahmed Qetrani, a defector who commanded 2,000 soldiers who had switched their allegiance, told journalists he questioned the value of an all-out war against Gadhafi's forces. "It would create two Libyan armies, it would make (civil war), it would ruin our infrastructure and set our country back 100 years," he said.

The Libya mission one year later: Into the unknown

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Libya+mission+year+later+Into+unknown/6172099/story.html>

• The Libya mission one year later: Into the unknown

By David Pugliese, The Ottawa Citizen February 17, 2012

- When the Libyan people rose up against Moammar Gadhafi one year ago this week, his regime's retaliation was immediate, and brutal. The world reacted almost as swiftly. Western leaders lined up to condemn the colonel they had once wooed and backed the rebels with warm words of support and relentless airstrikes. In Part 1 of a three-part series, David Pugliese looks at why we went to war — and what was missed in the rush to act.

- Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird beamed with pride last summer as he signed a Canadian bomb that would soon be dropped on Libya.

"Free Libya. Democracy," he wrote on the weapon.

- Baird was on a trip to visit Canadian aircrews in Italy as well as the leaders of Libya's rebel forces, his first major international visit in the Foreign Affairs portfolio. He returned to Ottawa full of praise for both.
- Canada, he pointed out, was at the forefront of the NATO mission in Libya. As for the rebel leaders, the minister said, they were just ordinary people — doctors, engineers and parents — trying to overthrow Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi.
- In Gadhafi's place would come democracy, the rebels had assured Baird. "I can honestly say their courage and their resolve are remarkable," he wrote in the Citizen in July.

Defence and political analysts, media commentators and newspaper editorialists have portrayed Canada's military intervention in Libya as a great victory. Canadian Lt.-Gen. Charles Bouchard, who led the NATO mission, has been hailed as a hero.

- But almost a year after Canada went to war to bring what it called freedom and democracy to Libya, the African nation is in a state of turmoil.

The National Transitional Council that Baird praised at the true representative of the Libyan people is ignored in many areas of the country. Gun battles have broken out as rebel fighters carve out pieces of land for their own tribes or organizations.

- The rebels, who would not have come to power if it weren't for NATO's bombing, and who once complained about the brutality of Gadhafi's regime, are now themselves brutalizing others.
- Prisoners — more than 8,000 men, women and children were thrown behind bars by the victorious forces — are being tortured and killed.
- Last month Médecins Sans Frontières pulled its staff out of prisons in Misrata after they were told to provide medical aid to prisoners so they could be tortured again. This week, Amnesty International reported it had documented the torture-killings of at least 12 detainees held by rebel militias.

Human rights agencies have gathered evidence about the ethnic cleansing by anti-Gadhafi forces of towns populated by black Libyans and African workers.

Months after the fighting stopped, new questions are being raised about Libya's future. It is becoming evident that the coming years will test Baird's earlier boast about the rebels: "The one thing we can say categorically is that they couldn't be any worse than Col. Gadhafi."

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From the day Gadhafi seized power in a 1969 coup, he was a thorn in the side of western nations.

He forced petroleum companies to pay higher royalties on Libyan oil, bringing billions more into the country's coffers. And while Gadhafi and his supporters ensured they had more than their share of that wealth, living a lavish lifestyle, the colonel also used the oil revenue to significantly improve Libyans' lives.

- When he seized power, life expectancy was 51 years. Under his regime it increased to 74. Literacy grew to 95 per cent for men, 78 per cent for women, and the per capita income increased to \$16,300.
- But like many Arab and African leaders, Gadhafi ruled the country of six million with an iron fist. His secret police arrested and tortured dissidents. In the 1970s and '80s his regime conducted show trials and televised executions. His forces brutally put down an uprising at a Tripoli prison in 1996, killing 1,200 political prisoners.
- Gadhafi promoted anti-U.S. views, funding a variety of terrorist organizations, from the IRA to guerillas in Colombia. His agents were behind the bombing of a German disco that killed and injured U.S. military personnel and his regime was responsible for the Lockerbie bombing, which killed 270 people. U.S. president Ronald Reagan labelled him a "mad

dog.”

- But some in Africa had a different view of Gadhafi. He was seen as a leader who stood up to the western colonial powers, demanding they compensate the continent's nations for the raw resources they had extracted over the decades.

Gadhafi provided hundreds of millions of dollars in aid for countries in the region and campaigned against apartheid in South Africa. He promoted the idea of a United States of Africa, a proposal that would eventually lead to the creation of the African Union.

- Gadhafi had a reputation for eccentric behaviour, but he was a keen tactician who had honed his survival skills over the decades. In the 1990s, he began a campaign to re-establish relations with the U.S. and the West, eventually offering up compensation to families of victims of the Lockerbie bombing and agreeing to dismantle his chemical and nuclear weapons programs.

Western nations welcomed Gadhafi back with few questions asked. They offered to sell him weapons and courted his officials. It didn't hurt that Gadhafi's Libyan Investment Authority had an estimated \$70 billion to spend.

- Prince Andrew dined with Gadhafi in November 2008, promoting Britain's oil interests. The British military sent members of its elite Special Air Service to provide training for the dictator's commandos, part of the growing relationship between the two nations.

In April 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warmly greeted one of the colonel's sons during high-level talks in Washington. "We deeply value the relationship between the United States and Libya," she said.

Less than three months later, Gadhafi himself was shaking hands with U.S. President Barack Obama during a G8 summit in Italy.

- Canada also moved to get in on the action. But it already had a head start since Canadian companies had a long history of involvement in Libya, even when Gadhafi was considered an international pariah. Although former diplomats would try to downplay the extent of the relationship once the war against Libya began, an estimated 70 Canadian firms were active in the country, mainly in gas and oil production.
- In the late 1980s, Canadian firms, with the backing of the Conservative government, pursued Libyan contracts. In 1989, Calgary-based Husky Oil and its partners spent nearly \$100 million, entering into exploration and production-sharing agreements.

In December 2004, then Liberal prime minister Paul Martin headed a delegation to visit Gadhafi and improve trade.

- By early 2011, Suncor Energy of Calgary had almost \$1 billion in assets tied up in Libya and the Quebec engineering firm SNC Lavalin had won contracts valued at more than \$800 million. SNC, with 2,000 employees in the country, was building a massive pipeline that Gadhafi envisioned would bring water in the south across the desert to cities in the north. It had also been awarded a contract to build a new airport in Benghazi and a \$275-million prison in Tripoli.
- Stephen Harper's Conservative government also forged links with the Libyan strongman. The government asked for — and received — the Libyan leader's help in freeing kidnapped Canadian diplomats Robert Fowler and Louis Guay, who had been taken by al-Qaeda's affiliate in 2008 in northwest Africa. During a trip to Libya the next year, then-foreign affairs minister Lawrence Cannon thanked the Gadhafi regime for using its extensive intelligence network and connections on the abduction case.
- Cannon had originally intended to give Gadhafi a dressing down over his decision to give a hero's welcome to the Libyan convicted in Lockerbie bombing, but that tough stance quickly evaporated after Libya threatened to shut down oil production by Canadian firms. Instead, Cannon flew to Tripoli to make amends and to remind Gadhafi that Canada was one of his supporters. The Conservatives had stood behind his bid to join the World Trade Organization as well as to get a seat on the International Atomic Energy Agency. In turn, Gadhafi had supported Canada's bid for a UN Security Council seat.
- Equally important for the West was the fact Gadhafi had become a valuable ally in the war on terror.

Canadian Defence Department reports from 2002, 2003, and 2006 obtained by the Citizen outline the extent Gadhafi supported U.S. efforts against al-Qaeda, noting he was the most vocal Arab leader in denouncing terrorism and supporting American retaliation against Islamic extremists.

In addition, Libya supplied intelligence to the U.S. on Islamic extremists as well as al-Qaeda affiliates operating in the Philippines, according to the reports.

- As a thank you for Gadhafi's support, the CIA had arranged the 2004 capture in Asia of Abdel Hakim Belhadj, a Libyan terrorist alleged to have ties to al-Qaeda. Belhadj, who would later rise to play a key role in the 2011 rebellion against Gadhafi, was put on one of the CIA's "rendition flights" and turned over to Libya's security agency.
- Gadhafi had his own reasons for co-operating with western intelligence agencies, according to DND's reports. He faced a growing threat from the al-Qaeda-linked Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, or LIFG. Its members had fought in Afghanistan in the 1990s but then turned their attention to their native country. They launched attacks on Libyan security forces and tried twice to assassinate Gadhafi.

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Still, some troops defecting to the rebel side were not sure how far they wanted to take the rebellion. Maj. Ahmed Qetrani, a defector who commanded 2,000 soldiers who had switched their allegiance, told journalists he questioned the value of an all-out war against Gadhafi's forces. "It would create two Libyan armies, it would make (civil war), it would ruin our infrastructure and set our country back 100 years," he said.

- At the Pentagon there was little appetite to become involved in yet another war in a Muslim country. Robert Gates, then the U.S. secretary of defence, opposed the establishment of a no-fly zone, saying to do so would require an attack on Libya. He argued the U.S. had interests in the region, but no vital interest in Libya.

Gates, however, was overruled by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who pushed Obama to intervene, arguing it was in the U.S.'s interests to do so.

- French President Nicolas Sarkozy was also seen as a major force behind convincing western leaders to agree to an attack on the Gadhafi regime. Left-wing celebrity activist Bernard-Henri Levy had helped persuade Sarkozy to back the rebels early on; France was the first nation to formally recognize the opposition forces as the country's government, even though they were only in control of a handful of towns and cities.

It was an abrupt change in attitude for the French leader, who just four years earlier had greeted Gadhafi with open arms, hosting him in Paris. Just months before Sarkozy's decision to embrace the rebels, the French had invited one of Gadhafi's sons to come to France to examine Rafale fighter aircraft they hoped the Libyans would purchase.

- But political commentators in France saw Sarkozy's strong support for the rebels squarely anchored in domestic politics. The president was facing an election in 2012 and had already been criticized for his government's close ties to autocratic governments. This was his moment to portray himself as a strong president who fought for human rights.

In the halls of power in Canada, there too was genuine concern about what Gadhafi might do to the civilians in Benghazi and rebel-held towns.

- But Harper, like Sarkozy, would also benefit politically from decisive action on Libya. Nelson Wiseman, a University of Toronto political science professor, said intervention in Libya gave Harper the opportunity to stand prominently on the world stage as the "leader of the people," an image that would serve him well as he headed into a federal election in

May.

A poll taken for the Defence Department during the war would later show that Canadians strongly approved of the government's decision to intervene in Libya.

- Some in the Canadian Forces, however, don't subscribe to the argument that concern for civilians or shoring up political fortunes at home had much of a role to play. They say it all came down to relations with the U.S. Once Canada's closest ally had decided to intervene, the Canadian government agreed to go to war.

At National Defence headquarters, military planners were already hard at work, looking over various scenarios on how to respond to the government's request to take part in a Libyan mission.

HMCS Charlottetown had left Halifax on March 2 to support efforts to get Canadians out of Libya. With that already accomplished, the warship would be reassigned to take part in a maritime blockade.

- On March 16, Canadian Air Force personnel were given a 48-hour notice that they too would be involved, according to documents obtained by the Citizen. A day later that was upgraded to 24 hours. On March 18th CF-18 fighter jets and other aircraft headed off to war.

On March 19, the largest international military attack on an Arab country since the 2003 invasion of Iraq began with waves of U.S., British and French aircraft launching strikes across Libya. Less than 48 hours earlier, the United Nations had passed resolutions to establish a no-fly zone and to protect civilians in Libya.

- The opening salvo included attacks by stealth bombers and more than 120 cruise missiles fired from submarines and ships. Overnight, Gadhafi's air force was all but wiped out.

The documents obtained the Citizen note that Canada's air force soon found itself under pressure from the government "to fly (its) first mission" and join in on the war.

On March 21, even before Parliament approved combat in Libya, Canadian CF-18s had flown their first mission. Two days later, they would drop their first bombs.

- "We are compelled to intervene," said Defence Minister Peter MacKay.

In Washington there was much discussion among lawmakers about whether the war against Libya was actually legal. But in Canada there was little debate. Parliament was firmly behind Prime Minister Harper, who highlighted the protection of civilians as justification to commit the Canadian Forces to its second war in a decade.

Like with the deployment of combat troops to Kandahar in 2005, no one in the military or government had much of an idea about how long the conflict could last. There were few details on its cost, or even what yardstick would be used to declare the mission accomplished.

- But Harper confidently predicted Gadhafi would be finished off quickly. The French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppé, echoed that optimism; at most the war would last several weeks, he said.

But western leaders had misjudged, and the popular rebellion they envisioned would occur against Gadhafi didn't materialize. Elders of key tribes in the country still remained loyal to the colonel. Gadhafi had a warning for the U.S. and NATO "crusaders" as he called them. Prepare, he said, for a long war.

- For the Canadian Forces and government, the war was also chance to show the country's leadership on the world stage. In late March, NATO announced that Canadian Lt.-Gen. Charles Bouchard would oversee the alliance's combat operations. From the beginning, the Conservatives portrayed Bouchard's appointment as a sign of the high esteem Canada was held in by alliance nations. Bouchard's appointment, said MacKay, "is an international recognition of the role that Canada plays in the world."

But defence sources suggest the appointment was one of convenience for the Americans. The U.S. had invaded Iraq in 2003 and had been fighting in Afghanistan since 2001. Pentagon officials didn't want an American to be seen at the helm of yet another attack on a Muslim country. At the same time, the Americans were keen to offset French influence over the mission.

- Bouchard, an able Canadian officer with connections to the U.S. through his work at NORAD, was the perfect candidate. "I was also a known entity to many of the leaders around," Bouchard would later acknowledge.

The Canadian general would have his work cut out for him though. Besides trying to dislodge Gadhafi's well-entrenched forces, NATO war planners were dealing with another problem: They had no idea who the rebels were.

Former CIA operatives acknowledged the agency had little ability to collect intelligence within Libya. Canada was worse off since it was getting most of its information from the U.S. and Britain.

- Shortly after the bombing started, some in the Pentagon started to worry about the involvement of Islamic extremists and members of al-Qaeda within the rebellion.

In late March, Admiral James Stavridis, NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe, told U.S. lawmakers the military coalition was still trying to determine who were the players in the rebel organization. "We have seen flickers in intelligence of potential al-Qaeda, Hezbollah," he acknowledged.

- Chad's president, Idriss Deby Itno, who called the international military intervention a "hasty decision," went one step further and warned that al-Qaeda's North African branch, known as AQIM, was playing an active role in the uprising.
- Similar claims had already been made by Gadhafi, who said the rebellion had been organized by AQIM and his old enemies the LIFG, who had vowed to overthrow the colonel and return the country to traditional Muslim values, including Sharia law.
- An estimated 500 LIFG members had fought in Afghanistan in the 1990s, some allied with Osama bin Laden, while extremists, centred in Benghazi and Darna, would later supply a steady flow of suicide bombers to fight U.S. forces in Iraq.

Gadhafi's brutal crackdown on LIFG throughout the 1990s had been welcomed by the Americans and by 2009, Libya

had forced LIFG to agree to a truce. The group publicly renounced violence and any links to al-Qaeda. In return, the Libyan government released more than 100 LIFG fighters from prison.

Now they were on the front lines, leading the rebellion against Gadhafi's regime.

- In Darna, the rebel militia was led and trained by jihadists who had fought in Afghanistan, including one who spent six years as a detainee in Guantanamo Bay.

One of the men, Abdel Hakim al-Hasady, an Islamic preacher, oversaw the recruitment of about 300 rebel fighters. He told journalists he thought bin Laden was a "good Muslim."

- And his view of the U.S. had changed somewhat since American warplanes started bombing Gadhafi's troops. "If we hated the Americans 100 per cent, today it is less than 50 per cent," he explained.

In mid-April, Gadhafi's forces ambushed and killed another seasoned jihadist turned rebel, Abdel-Moneim Mokhtar. Mokhtar had learned many of his skills fighting in Kandahar province under Jalaluddin Haqqani, an Afghan warlord who had fought Russian, and later, Canadian and U.S. troops.

Other LIFG operatives also came to the forefront of the rebellion. Abdel Hakim Belhadj, who would later become one of the most powerful men in the new Libya as military commander of Tripoli, was a key one. Branded as a terrorist by the Americans, he had been taken into custody by the CIA in Malaysia in 2004, interrogated and then turned over to Gadhafi who immediately imprisoned him.

- Now being supported by NATO, Belhadj denied the LIFG was ever linked to al-Qaeda and said the group's area of operations was always Libya. Asked to explain, then, how he came to fight in Afghanistan with al-Qaeda, he suggested serendipity played a major role.

"It happened that we found ourselves in the same place at the same time as al-Qaeda: in Afghanistan, where we sometimes fought next to them it was to liberate the country, but we were never at their service," he told the French publication Le Monde.

Although some Canadian military officers in private jokingly referred to the NATO jets bombing Gadhafi's troops as "al-Qaeda's air force" there was no concerted effort in Canada to raise concerns about Islamic extremists within the rebel ranks.

- In fact, Lt.-Gen. Bouchard dismissed outright the idea that jihadists were involved. Those on the front lines, he told journalists, were lawyers, doctors and taxi drivers, all fighting for their freedom.

It would be six months after the war started that Canada's ambassador to Libya, Sandra McCardell, acknowledged to parliamentarians the presence of jihadists in rebel ranks.

The Canadian government, it seemed, had little real information about what was actually happening in Libya.

[Our foreign policy on Syria is the same as al-Qaeda's – something isn't right here – Telegraph Blogs](http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/petermullen/100137025/our-foreign-policy-on-syria-is-the-same-as-al-qaedas-something-isnt-right-here)

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- [Peter Mullen](#)

The Rev Dr Peter Mullen is a priest of the Church of England and former Rector of St Michael, Cornhill and St Sepulchre-without-Newgate in the City of London. He has written for many publications including the Wall Street Journal.

- Our foreign policy on Syria is the same as al-Qaeda's – something isn't right here
- By [Peter Mullen](#) [Politics](#) Last updated: February 13th, 2012
- Al-Zawahiri, chief of al-Qaeda, [has pledged his terrorist organisation's support for the rebels in Syria](#). How reassuring to see therefore, that our very own Foreign Secretary, William Hague, and al-Qaeda are on the same side. Quite a triumph for foreign policy that: discovering that we share one of the main aims of the international jihadist gang we have been trying to exterminate for the last decade.

Naturally, the bien pensants, the neocons and the obsessive democrats in the West – notably in the BBC and whole sections of the press – are all on the side of the Syrian rebels. They always salivate juicily at the prospect of a dictator being brought down. It's a pity that these wishful thinkers don't have a little more foresight – or even better memories.

- For they imagined the downfall of Saddam would restore the fertile crescent to conditions resembling the prelapsarian Garden of Eden. But after nine years in which hundreds of thousands have been killed, Iraq is a worse hell hole than it was when Saddam was running the show. The West's no fly zone, designed to help the Libyan revolution, was a military success. The only trouble is that the triumphant revolutionaries have turned out not to be tweeting democrats, arranging utopia on their mobile phones, but quite as savage as the regime which they displaced.
- The protesters are back in Egypt's Tahrir Square a year after the uprising that was supposed to have got rid of the tyrant Mubarak has managed to leave the corrupt generals still firmly in charge. Unrest continues – largely unreported – in Bahrain and Yemen.

The West's simplistic backing for the Syrian rebels looks like the triumph of ignorance over experience. For the fact is

that Syria is full of minorities – Christians, Kurds, Jews, Armenians – who are telling us plainly that they are in mortal dread at the prospect of the fall of Assad. One of the Christian leaders in Syria quoted an old Arab saying, "Forty years' tyranny is better than one night of anarchy." Ironically, if and when Assad does fall, it will be Israel – the West's *bête noire* – that takes in the refugees from the triumphant Islamists.

- I recall the Iranian revolution, the 33rd anniversary of which is currently being celebrated by the Islamists' deployment of boats rigged out for suicide bombings in the straits of Hormuz and a promised announcement from Ahmadinejad that his murderously repressive and hostile regime has made "Important progress in the nuclear field". Yet, back in 1979 when the Ayatollahs took over in Iran there was rejoicing among those same wishful thinkers in the West. Why? Because the Islamists had brought down the pro-Western Shah.

Our besetting problem arises out of the fact that too many influential people in the western governments and mass media hate the West even more fiercely than they hate the West's enemies.

Asia Times Online :: Middle East News, Iraq, Iran current affairs

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/NB14Ak01.html

- Feb 14, 2012
- **THE ROVING EYE**

Syria, the new Libya

By Pepe Escobar

- A Kalashnikov in Iraq, until recently, sold for US\$100. Now it's at least \$1,000, and most probably \$1,500 (those were the days when Sunnis joining the resistance in 2003 could buy a fake Kalashnikov made in Romania for \$20).
- Destination of choice of the \$1,500 Kalashnikov in 2012: Syria. Network: al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, also known as

AQI. Recipients: infiltrated jihadis operating side-by-side with the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Also shuttling between Syria and Iraq is car bombing and suicide bombing, as in two recent bombings in the suburbs of Damascus and the suicide bombing last Friday in Aleppo.

Who would have thought that what the House of Saud wants in Syria - an Islamist regime - is exactly what al-Qaeda wants in Syria?

Ayman "The Surgeon" al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's number one, in an eight-minute video titled "Onwards, Lions of Syria", has just called for the support of Muslims in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to topple Bashar al-Assad "pernicious, cancerous regime". They had been responding, in kind, even before The Surgeon came into the picture. Not only those, but especially transplanted Libyan "freedom fighters", formerly known as "rebels".

Who would have thought that what NATOGCC (North Atlantic Treaty Organization-Gulf Cooperation Council) wants for Syria is exactly what al-Qaeda wants for Syria?

- So when the Assad regime, for all its ghastly military offensives that essentially victimize civilians caught in cross fire, says it's fighting "terrorists", it's not exactly bending the truth. Even that ubiquitous, proverbial entity, the unnamed "US official", is blaming AQI for the recent bombings. Same for Iraq's Deputy Interior Minister Adnan al-Assadi; "We have intelligence information that a number of Iraqi jihadists went to Syria."

So if Syria could not be the new Libya in the sense of a UN resolution authorizing NATO humanitarian bombing - vetoed by BRICS members Russia and China - Syria is a new Libya in the sense of unsavory ties between the "rebels" and hardcore Salafi-jihadis.

And as the West absolutely loves a win-win situation, no matter how prefabricated, that could also turn into the perfect Pentagon *casus belli* to intervene - as in freeing Syria from an "al-Qaeda" which was never there in the first place. Remember - for all the hype about the Pentagon/Obama administration's "pivoting" from the Middle East to East Asia, the global war on terror (GWOT), rebranded by Obama as "overseas contingency operations" (OCO), is still alive and kicking.

- **Liberate me so I can kill at ease**

Last year, Asia Times Online extensively reported that "liberated" Libya - "liberated" by the so-called NATO rebels - would descend into militia hell. That's exactly what's happening; at least 250 different militias in Misurata alone, according to Human Rights Watch, acting as cops on the beat, judges and exterminators all rolled into one. There's no Ministry of Justice to speak of in "liberated" Libya. If you go to jail, you end up dead; and if you are a sub-Saharan African, you get a bonus of extensive torture at a liberated resort before meeting the same fate.

Just as in Libya, as a matter of strategy, for the House of Saud/Qatar Sunni axis, any possibility of a real dialogue between the (armed) insurrection and the Assad regime has been thwarted. After all; the key objective is regime change. Thus crude propaganda - in an Arab media largely controlled either by Saudis or Qataris - rules.

Example; the much-lauded Britain-based Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, which vomits unending, unsubstantiated statistics on government "massacres" - and even "genocide" - gets its funds from a Dubai entity financed by shady Western and GCC donors

- As a bonus, the non-stop "opposition" spin totally laser-guides Western corporate media coverage. CNN attributed the Aleppo bombing last Friday to "terrorists" - in quotation marks; imagine the hysteria if this was the US Green Zone in Iraq bombed by the Sunni resistance in the mid-2000s. The BBC actually believed the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood spin according to which the Syrian government bombed itself; it would be like the Pentagon bombing itself in the Green Zone. As for Arab media - largely controlled by Saudis and Qataris - it has totally ignored the AQI connection.

The GCC League - formerly Arab League - after bombing its own report on Syria because it didn't fit the prefabricated narrative of an "evil" regime unilaterally bombing its people, is now peddling a supposedly humanitarian plan B; a joint Arab/UN peacekeeping mission to "supervise the execution of a cease-fire". But no one should be fooled; the agenda remains regime change.

- Prince Saud al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, has been making the right noises, ruling out a humanitarian intervention. At the same time, it's refreshing to hear the oh so progressive House of Saud carping about the "lack of commitment of the Syrian government", and pontificating that "what Syria is witnessing is not racist, not sectarian, nor guerrilla war, but a mass purge without any humanitarian considerations".

Imagine the House of Saud's "humanitarian considerations" should a pro-democracy movement emerge in the Shi'ite majority eastern province (it did; and it was ruthlessly pre-empted). Better yet; look at how "humanitarian" they looked in their invasion of Bahrain.

The NATOGCC agenda remains the same; regime change, by any means possible. Even Warrior-in-Chief US President Barack Obama said so himself. The GCC minions will happily oblige. So expect an inflation of Kalashnikovs crossing borders, more car bombings, more suicide bombings, more civilians caught in cross fire, and the slow, immensely tragic, fragmentation of Syria.

Tunisia says it cracks Islamist "terrorist" unit with ties to Libya

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/13/194458.html>

• Tunisia says it cracks Islamist "terrorist" unit with ties to Libya

Monday, 13 February 2012

- By REUTERS
TUNIS
- Tunisia has broken up a "terrorist organization" with links to al-Qaeda and arrested 12 members, some of whom had received military training in Libya and were seeking to set up an Islamic state, Interior Minister Ali Larayed said on Monday.

Larayed, a senior member of the moderate Islamist Ennahda party that now leads Tunisia's government, said that a further nine members of the group were on the run inside Libya.

"Those accused in this case had previously mostly been in prison (in Tunisia) on terrorism charges and a number of them received training in Libya during the Libyan revolution," he told reporters.

- "We have confiscated several weapons including 25 Kalashnikov rifles and 2,500 bullets ... They were intending to establish an Islamist state."

"The investigation showed that they have relationships with groups close to al-Qaeda in Libya and perhaps with members of al-Qaeda in Algeria," he said.

- It was not immediately clear whether the group were plotting any specific attacks but Larayed said they were connected to a handful of fighters who clashed with Tunisian security forces in the eastern port city of Sfax this month. Tunisian forces killed two gunmen and captured a third.
- Elections in October ushered in a new parliament in which Ennahda won the largest share of seats. Ennahda has since formed a government in coalition with two secular partners.

Tunisia's internal security forces were shaken by the revolt that ousted Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and brought down his police state a year ago and secularist groups have accused Ennahda of being too soft on religious extremists.

Islamists of all stripes faced severe repression under Ben Ali, and Larayed himself was incarcerated for years -- making Ennahda wary of cracking down on more hardline Islamists.

Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring protests that swept the region in 2011, has made a relatively smooth transition to an elected assembly that will draft a new constitution.

However, protests and strikes have continued in the center of the country, where unemployment has remained high.

Libyan PM calls for security meeting over weapons | World | Reuters

<http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFTRE80S0BA20120129>

• Libyan PM calls for security meeting over weapons

Sun Jan 29, 2012

- ADDIS ABABA (Reuters) - Libyan Prime Minister Abdurrahim al-Keib called on Sunday for a regional security conference to tackle a proliferation of weapons by exiled supporters of former leader Muammar Gaddafi.

The Libyan civil war may have given militant groups in Africa's Sahel region like Boko Haram and al Qaeda access to large weapons caches, said a U.N. report released on Thursday.

"(There is) still a real threat from some of the armed remnants of the former regime who escaped outside the country and still roam freely. This is a threat for us, for neighbouring countries and our shared relations," Keib told African Union leaders in Addis Ababa.

"My country calls for a regional security conference in Libya of interior and defence ministers of neighbouring countries," he told the summit, the first since Gaddafi's death last year.

A U.N. report said the Libyan civil war may have created a proliferation of small arms, giving militant groups like Boko Haram and al Qaeda access to large weapons caches in Africa's Sahel region that straddle the Sahara, including Nigeria, Niger and Chad.

The report said some countries believe weapons have been smuggled into the Sahel by former fighters in Libya - Libyan army regulars and mercenaries who fought on behalf of Gaddafi, who was ousted and killed by rebels.

Links between al Qaeda and Boko Haram have become a growing source of concern for the countries of the region, the U.N. report said.

The Islamist sect Boko Haram has killed at least 935 people since it launched an uprising in Nigeria in 2009, including 250 in the first weeks of this year, Human Rights Watch said last week.

(Reporting by Yara Bayoumy; Editing by James Macharia)

[Gaddafi: Revolt aims to take control of Libyan oil | Al Bawaba](http://www.albawaba.com/main-headlines/gaddafi-revolt-aims-take-control-libyan-oil)

<http://www.albawaba.com/main-headlines/gaddafi-revolt-aims-take-control-libyan-oil>

- Gaddafi: Revolt aims to take control of Libyan oil
- Published March 2nd, 2011
- 14 days after the start of the popular protests in Libya, leader Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader, on Wednesday appeared on TV and said he does not have the powers of the leader, stressing that the "Libyan people is the ruler."

Gaddafi spoke during his participation in the annual celebration of the 34th anniversary of the so-called the "declaration of the people's power". Gaddafi stressed "there is no regime or president or government or authority," adding, "We put our fingers in the eyes of those who question the authority of the people."

He added: "I want to remind the world that we turned from Republic to Jamahiriya, i.e. the country is ruled by the masses." According to him, the Libyan people exercise authority over the people's congresses.

- Gaddafi claimed that the protests, which are taking place in Libya, began following the infiltration of al Qaeda cells into the country. They attacked security brigades and seized their weapons. He said that detainees released from Guantanamo moved to Benghazi an Zawiya. He said that the killing of the militants is possible but "we did not order to kill them even now," after they took control of Derna, Benghazi and other cities.
- Gaddafi called on the United Nations to dispatch a fact-finding commission to Libya, adding that there is a conspiracy to control the petroleum of Libya and Libyan territory.

[Libya says al Qaeda set up Islamic Emirate in the east | Al Bawaba](http://www.albawaba.com/main-headlines/libya-says-al-qaeda-set-islamic-emirate-east)

<http://www.albawaba.com/main-headlines/libya-says-al-qaeda-set-islamic-emirate-east>

• **Libya says al Qaeda set up Islamic Emirate in the east**

Published February 23rd, 2011

- Libya's Deputy Foreign Minister Khalid Alkhaaim Wednesday said that al-Qaeda had set up an Islamic emirate in Derna region (east of the country), led by Abdel Karim al Husdi, a former detainee at Guantanamo Bay. He made these comments during a meeting with the ambassadors of the European Union in Tripoli.
- Alkhaaim said that al-Qaeda leaders wish to turn Libya into "Taliban". The Libyan official said Al_Husdi has an assistant, named Khairallah Buraasi, a resident of al Beida City. He added "Now they have the FM radio frequency and they started to impose the Burqa," saying that these "Islamists liquidated people because they refused to cooperate."

Meanwhile, it is reported that battalions of the Libyan army in the mountain areas joined what it is called as the "Green Revolution" of the Libyan people/ Other reports claim the army deployed large numbers of Libyan soldiers near Sabratha city, west of Tripoli, after protesters destroyed all offices of the security services there.

[Al-Qaida leadership almost wiped out in Pakistan, British officials believe | World news | guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/25/al-qaida-leadership-pakistan-africa)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/dec/25/al-qaida-leadership-pakistan-africa>

• Al-Qaida leadership almost wiped out in Pakistan, British officials believe

Senior members of al-Qaida are feared to be moving to north Africa to open up a new front after being weakened in Pakistan

- [Jason Burke](#)
- [guardian.co.uk](#), Sunday 25 December 2011



- Haqqani Taliban fighters in their mountain camp in eastern Afghanistan. Photograph: Ghaith Abdul-Ahad for the Guardian
- Senior British officials believe that a "last push" in 2012 is likely to definitively destroy [al-Qaida](#)'s remaining senior leadership in [Pakistan](#), opening a new phase in the battle against Islamist terrorism.

So many senior members of the organisation have been killed in an intense campaign of air strikes involving missiles launched from unmanned drones that "only a handful of the key players" remain alive, one official said.
- However, well-informed sources outside government and close to Islamist groups in north [Africa](#) said at least two relatively senior al-Qaida figures have already made their way to [Libya](#), with others intercepted en route, raising fears that north Africa could become a new "theatre of jihad" in coming months or years.

"A group of very experienced figures from north Africa left camps in [Afghanistan](#)'s [north-eastern] Kunar province where they have been based for several years and travelled back across the Middle East," one source said. "Some got stopped but a few got through."

It is unclear whether the moves from west Asia to north Africa are prompted by a desire for greater security – which seems unlikely as Nato forces begin to withdraw from Afghanistan – or part of a strategic attempt to exploit the aftermath of the Arab spring. They may even be trying to shift the centre of gravity of al-Qaida's effort back to the homelands of the vast majority of its members.
- Since the death of Osama bin Laden in a US special forces raid in Pakistan last May, other senior leaders have also been eliminated, even though the numbers of strikes are lower than last year.

The problems for al-Qaida in west Asia have been compounded by a smaller flow of volunteers reaching makeshift bases in Pakistan's tribal zones. "I think they are really very much weakened," said the official. "You can't say they don't pose a threat – they do – but it's a much lesser one."
- British and US intelligence sources have told the Guardian they estimate that there are less than 100 "al-Qaida or al-Qaida-affiliated" militants in Afghanistan, of whom only "a handful" were seen to pose a threat internationally to the UK or other western nations.
- Officials dealing with Afghanistan and Pakistan say they see al-Qaida's activity as "effectively marginal" to events there. Instead, local networks, such as that run by the Haqqani family in the semi-autonomous tribal agency of North Waziristan on the Afghan-Pakistan border, are deemed more important.
- Repeated efforts to push the Pakistani authorities to take military action against the Haqqanis have been rebuffed. Western and international officials said senior Pakistani military officers insisted they needed the Haqqani network, which has not attacked Pakistani targets though it has repeatedly struck Nato and other western targets in Afghanistan, to keep militant groups that make up the Pakistani Taliban network "under control". These latter have repeatedly struck civilian and military targets within Pakistan.
- Western officials dismissed the argument as far-fetched and unrealistic. One international official said, however, that there was evidence the Haqqani family had been acting as intermediaries between the Pakistani secret services and militant groups and described the Pakistani position as "understandable".

"To move against the Haqqanis is a no-win option for the Pakistani military. If they suffer heavy casualties and fail to eliminate the group, they lose their authority and a key interlocutor. If they succeed, they lose a key asset," the official said.

Though the hunt for Ayman al-Zawahiri, the veteran Egyptian militant strategist who replaced Bin Laden as leader of al-Qaida, is a top priority, western officials say there is equal emphasis on eliminating those immediately below him in the now somewhat chaotic hierarchy.

- These include Saif al-Adel, an experienced operator who may have returned to Pakistan, and Abu Yahya al-Libi, a Libyan in his mid-40s who escaped from a US prison in Afghanistan and has featured in propaganda videos.

Adel interests western intelligence services as "he is exactly the sort of low-profile, effective type who you don't want". Some doubt he is in Pakistan at all, suggesting he may be in detention in Iran.

"The fact that we can't be sure where someone like [Adel] actually is underlines how problematic dealing with this whole issue still is. There's still a lot we simply don't know," one official said.

- Few doubt that al-Qaida is evolving. "Al-Zawahiri's leadership is transitional and he is handicapped by his own old school background. We are waiting to see what a new al-Qaida might look like," the official said.

Overall, analysts say, the picture is one of fragmentation, with groups in Somalia, Yemen and elsewhere pursuing local agendas. One example is the apparent move of al-Qaida-linked militants in Somalia into humanitarian aid, a departure from the core leadership's past strategies. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram group has had financial help from the affiliate al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb but is not thought to have any interest in being part of al-Qaida global.

In Europe, security services say levels of radicalisation have stabilised. Analysis of a list of "recent martyrs" published by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which shares al-Qaida's ideology and is also based in Pakistan's tribal areas, appears to show that fewer number of Europeans than feared reached the group, previously been favoured by German-based extremists. Of the near 100 listed, only one was German and most appeared to be local men.

- The move to Libya is seen as particularly alarming. William Hague, the foreign secretary, recently warned that mercenaries driven out of Libya could switch allegiance to al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. While this seems unlikely, sources in Libyan mainstream Islamist groups say there is evidence of grassroots activism by individuals linked to al-Qaida that could lead to new cells being formed.

In a recent communique, Zawahiri made a particular appeal to Libyan fighters not to lay down or hand in their weapons.

[How the Arab Spring Has Weakened U.S. Intelligence - The Daily Beast](http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/06/12/how-the-arab-spring-has-weakened-u-s-intelligence.html)

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/06/12/how-the-arab-spring-has-weakened-u-s-intelligence.html>

[Source: Al Qaeda leader sends veteran jihadists to establish presence in Libya - CNN.com](http://edition.cnn.com/2011/12/29/world/meast/libya-jihadists)

<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/12/29/world/meast/libya-jihadists>

• Source: Al Qaeda leader sends veteran jihadists to establish presence in Libya

By Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, CNN

December 29, 2011

- **STORY HIGHLIGHTS**
 - A source tells CNN that jihadists are mobilizing forces in eastern Libya
 - The jihadists include a veteran fighter who had been detained in Britain
 - Western intelligence has voiced concern about Islamist extremists in Libya
- **(CNN)** -- Al Qaeda's leadership has sent experienced jihadists to Libya in an effort to build a fighting force there, according to a Libyan source briefed by Western counter-terrorism officials.

The jihadists include one veteran fighter who had been detained in Britain on suspicion of terrorism. The source describes him as committed to al Qaeda's global cause and to attacking U.S. interests.

The source told CNN that the al Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, personally dispatched the former British detainee to Libya earlier this year as the Gadhafi regime lost control of large swathes of the country.

- The man arrived in Libya in May and has since begun recruiting fighters in the eastern region of the country, near the Egyptian border. He now has some 200 fighters mobilized, the source added. Western intelligence agencies are aware of his activities, according to the source.

Another al Qaeda operative, of dual European-Libyan nationality, was arrested in an unnamed country on his way to Libya from the Afghan-Pakistan border region.

The individual now trying to establish a bridgehead for al Qaeda in Libya is known as "AA." His name has not been made public because of UK law on terrorist suspects who are detained but not charged.

- "AA" has been close to Ayman al-Zawahiri since the 1980s and first traveled to Afghanistan in the early 1990s to join mujahideen fighting the Soviet occupation -- as did hundreds of Arab fighters.

"AA" later moved to the United Kingdom, where he began spreading al Qaeda's ideology to younger Muslims. He was

an admirer of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who emerged as leader of al Qaeda in Iraq after the U.S. invasion and who led an especially brutal campaign that targeted civilians and promoted sectarian hatred between Sunni and Shia Muslims.

After the terrorist attacks in London in July 2005, heightened concern about terrorist activities in the UK led to the arrest of a number of Libyans resident in England.

- "AA" was detained under what was termed a "control order," a mechanism used to detain terrorist suspects -- usually under home arrest -- without charging them. Control orders have been used in dozens of cases where the government does not want to reveal evidence in court for fear of compromising security sources. Those subject to control orders are not named by authorities.

"AA" also spent some time in Belmarsh high-security jail in the UK in 2006-07, possibly because he was seen as a flight-risk. It is also possible, according to the source, that he was resisting legal moves to have him deported to Libya. At the time, relations between the Gadhafi regime and the United Kingdom were improving, and Libyan authorities were seeking the deportation of opponents.

At some point the control order lapsed, and "AA" left Britain late in 2009 and went back to the Afghan-Pakistan border area -- taking two teenagers with him. One was subsequently killed.

Western intelligence agencies have voiced concern in public and privately about the potential for Islamist extremists and especially al Qaeda to gain a foothold in Libya.

- The al Qaeda leadership has included several Libyans -- among them Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, who was killed in August, and Abu Yahya al-Libi.

In a video message to fellow Libyans distributed on jihadist forums earlier this month, al-Libi said: "At this crossroads you have found yourselves, you either choose a secular regime that pleases the greedy crocodiles of the West and for them to use it as a means to fulfill their goals, or you take a strong position and establish the religion of Allah."

- Militant groups have long had a presence in eastern Libya, even if they were ruthlessly suppressed by the Gadhafi regime. Al Qaeda documents discovered in Iraq in 2006 showed that many of the fighters who had joined the insurgency had come from eastern Libya.

And a U.S. diplomatic cable from 2008 -- published this year by WikiLeaks -- told of support for extremist Islamist views in the town of Derna, which is close to where "AA" has established a presence.

Entitled "Die Hard in Derna" the cable describes the town as a "wellspring of Libyan foreign fighters" for al Qaeda in Iraq.

The diplomat who traveled to Derna quoted a local businessman who had "likened young men in the town to Bruce Willis' character in the action picture 'Die Hard,' who stubbornly refused to die quietly. For them, resistance against coalition forces in Iraq is an important act of 'jihad' and a last act of defiance against the Gadhafi regime."

High youth unemployment, discrimination by the Gadhafi regime and the influence of veteran Libyan jihadists from Afghanistan all played a role in radicalizing a new generation.

"It's jihad -- it's our duty, and you're talking about people who don't have much else to be proud of," the businessman said.

[Libya: A Natural Gas Deal and Regional Power | STRATFOR](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:c3fRiMGwvH0J:www.stratfor.com/analysis/libya_natural_gas_deal_and_regional_power+STRATFOR+Libya:+A+Natural+Gas-)

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• Libya: A Natural Gas Deal and Regional Power

July 8, 2008

- **Libya** has announced a **deal** involving the development of an oil refinery and gasoline stations in Egypt, as well as a **natural gas** pipeline running from the Egyptian city of Alexandria to the coastal Libyan city of Tobruk. This energy agreement could boost Libyan investment in Egypt from the current \$2 billion to as much as \$10 billion in the next two

years alone.

The **deal**, which is likely to be heavily financed by Eni, comes as **Libya** has seen an immense increase in oil revenues and a stabilizing domestic political situation, allowing it to expand its role in North Africa.

- **Libya** is positioning itself to expand its energy resources for export purposes, particularly to Italy and the rest of Europe. It now has more breathing room to do this, as relations with the West have seen significant improvements in recent years.

Since 2003, when **Libya** came out of the diplomatic cold by renouncing its nuclear program, the North African nation has seen a substantial increase in oil revenues thanks to soaring oil prices. It is now rapidly attracting Western investment for its vastly underdeveloped energy industry. Previously, the government of Moammar Gadhafi made a number of erratic foreign policy maneuvers in a bid to spread Libya's influence around the globe. This included supporting militant groups everywhere from Colombia to the Philippines.

- Since then, Libya's geopolitical imperative has become regime preservation, particularly as a **power** transition approaches between Gadhafi and his son. Bringing in Western investment for the country's energy industry to help fund efforts to maintain political stability at home — namely in buying off opposition forces such as the [Libyan Islamic Fighting Group](#), a jihadist element with close ties to al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb — has become another top priority.

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[\(click image to enlarge\)](#)

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Western investment has allowed **Libya** to boost energy production significantly, with the North African country more than doubling its annual **natural gas** output from 2005 to 2006 to 28 billion cubic meters (bcm), with 13 bcm of that total going to Italy and Spain. Currently, about 8 bcm per year of **natural gas** is exported from Libya's Mediterranean coast facility in Mellitah via the Greenstream underwater pipeline to southeastern Sicily, from where it is routed to mainland Italy and then points farther north in Europe. The addition of Egyptian **natural gas** could boost the throughput to as much as 11 bcm per year.

- The Egyptian **deal** thus makes a good **deal** of geopolitical sense. By building energy infrastructure to refine Libyan crude for the Egyptian market and hooking Egypt into a **natural gas** pipeline network to Europe, **Libya** can expand its political and economic leverage over its formidable eastern neighbor. With energy prices soaring, **Libya** thus is taking up the opportunity to beef up its energy industry and assert itself geopolitically so that it can become a force to be reckoned with both domestically and in its wider region.

[Libya: Petrodollars and Peace With the Jihadists | STRATFOR](#)

[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:63VLpuwsfSsJ:www.stratfor.com/analysis/libya_petrodollars_and_peace_jihadists+STRATFOR+Libya:+Petrodollars+and+Pe)

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• **Libya: Petrodollars and Peace With the Jihadists**

July 7, 2008

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MAHMUD TURKIA/AFP/Getty Images

Libyan Islamic Fighting Group prisoners being released

Summary

The leaders of Libya's main Islamist opposition group, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, are nearing a deal to give up their armed struggle against the government of Moammar Gadhafi, according to a July 7 report from a leading Saudi newspaper. Libya's success in managing its jihadist threat has much to do with the price of oil. With ample cash to spend on buying the support of its domestic opponents, the Gadhafi government appears to be on stable footing to attract much-needed foreign investment for its energy sector.

- Analysis

Leaders of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) are close to reaching an agreement on abandoning their armed resistance against Moammar Gadhafi's government, Saudi-owned Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper reported July 7. The reports indicate that **Libya** is putting its oil money to good use.

Numan Bin Uthman, the LIFG's former leader, held an interview with the Saudi newspaper in which he revealed that negotiations between the group's leaders and the Gadhafi government in the BuSalim Prison in Tripoli (where most of the group's members are detained) are yielding substantial results.

The LIFG sprouted in **Libya** in the early 1990s after a large number of Libyan **jihadists** returned home from Afghanistan, where they had teamed up with Afghan mujahideen to fight the Soviet Union. The group quickly became a thorn in Gadhafi's side by starting a low-level insurgency that included attacks against security forces and even assassination attempts against Gadhafi himself. A massive crackdown swiftly followed, forcing most LIFG leaders to go underground and pursue a new arena in which to wage violent jihad, which they found in Afghanistan and Iraq. LIFG eventually folded itself formally into the al Qaeda network in late 2006, when it joined Islamist militant groups from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia to declare the formation of [al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb](#), informally known as al Qaeda's North African node.

- While other North African nations — particularly Algeria, Egypt and Morocco — are dealing with an ongoing struggle to stamp out Islamist militancy, **Libya** largely has contained the jihadist threat that exists within its borders, mainly through the use of force. But with al Qaeda taking a beating in Iraq, **Libya** is preparing for the [inevitable jihadist exodus](#), especially as Libyans increasingly are being found among al Qaeda's senior ranks.

Libya has recognized that it needs more than force to deal with this impending problem. Saif al-Islam, the aging Gadhafi's son and heir, has led the effort to bring the government's jihadist opponents back into the political fold through his organization, the Al-Qadhafi Foundation for Development. When **Libya** released at least 90 members of the LIFG on April 9, it was clear the negotiations between al-Islam and the LIFG were getting somewhere.

Libya certainly has the cash to persuade these **jihadists** to reach a political deal. Libya's first priority is regime preservation, and its second is development of the country's energy industry — especially now that Tripoli has shed its pariah status and become the West's best example of a rogue gone right. Both of these items on the Libyan agenda are directly tied to buying political support from its jihadist opponents and creating a hostile environment for jihadist activity.

- Since 2003, when **Libya** abandoned its unconventional weapons program, net oil export revenues have more than doubled thanks to the steady price climb in crude oil.



And this is just the beginning. Once Libya's cash economy gets developed through a flood of foreign investment, it will have plenty more **petrodollars** to spare to keep the domestic front quiet, particularly as the elder Gadhafi prepares to officially hand the political reins to his son. Libya's oil money is already being put to use, with Uthman claiming in his interview that the released LIFG members "have been given 10,000 dinars (\$8,467) each to start a new decent life and 300 dinars (\$254) each in immediate assistance from the Prison Administration on the day they were released".

- If the Saudi report is accurate and the LIFG is indeed close to laying down its arms, **Libya** will have scored a major victory at home. But the benefits spread beyond Libya's borders. Uthman disclosed in his interview that LIFG leaders have requested that he carry the message to LIFG-linked militants abroad that the negotiations with the Libyan government are moving ahead. By reaching out to their comrades, the LIFG's deal-making with the Gadhafis could very well impact the broader jihadist movement.

Of course there will be resistance to such a deal, from elements within both the LIFG and al Qaeda's North African node, which opposes striking a deal with a longtime enemy. But this, too, could work to Tripoli's advantage. Much like the way Egypt's security regime handles its Islamist militant opponents, **Libya** can pursue a divide-and-conquer strategy by exploiting the intra-Islamist rivalries that are bound to flare from these negotiations. As long as the bulk of the movement moves toward political accommodation, **Libya** will be taking a major, oil-funded step toward domestic stability. This will be key to establishing the security environment needed for Western investors champing at the bit to get into the Libyan energy market.

[Libya: From Scoundrel to Sidekick in Militant Search? | STRATFOR](#)

[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:7CREe0iSQtAJ:www.stratfor.com/libya_scoundrel_sidekick_militant_search+STRATFOR+Libya:+From+Scoundrel+to+Sidekick)

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• **Libya: From Scoundrel to Sidekick in Militant Search?**

March 17, 2004 | 2025 GMT

- Summary

With the anti-terrorism battle refocusing on Europe and South Asia, al Qaeda and other organizations will seek sanctuary in less-scrutinized parts of the world. North and West Africa seem to be likely spots for militants to turn up, and the United States will seek to bolster ties with governments in those areas in an effort to exploit internal intelligence capabilities and root out **militant** cells. The four primary allies on a new North African front are likely to be Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and — notably — **Libya**.

Analysis

- As the war against terrorism focuses on Europe and the tribal hinterlands of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Islamist **militant** organizations are likely to seek sanctuary elsewhere. Their choices are likely to focus on relatively lawless areas with substantial Muslim populations, areas like the Balkans — and North and West Africa, which are beginning to come under greater scrutiny due to reported connections with the March 11 bombings in Madrid.

As U.S. military and intelligence assets have been spread increasingly thin, the United States has sought regional allies willing to carry out counterterrorism operations with minimal U.S. support. This strategy has been used in Western Europe and in East Asia, where the United States has essentially appointed Australia as its regional deputy. The United States will seek to extend this strategy to areas that are ripe for exploitation by **militant** organizations.

Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, **Libya**, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger have been largely overlooked by U.S. military and intelligence agencies, which have been preoccupied with operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and an ongoing commitment on the Korean peninsula. Additionally, Western European countries do not yet possess the central command authority, unified foreign policy and [military power](#) necessary to carry out significant counterterrorism operations in North and West Africa.

- North and West Africa's existing resistance movements, porous borders, questionable control by some central governments and majority Muslim populations create fertile sanctuaries for [Islamist extremists](#). To deal with such a hospitable **militant** environment, the United States will seek the cooperation of regional powers to contain and root out [militants](#) in their midst. The United States will seek to involve itself with the more stable players in the region — Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and the biggest fish: **Libya**.

Morocco and Tunisia present similar demographics and political challenges for the United States. Both nations possess amenable governments and Islamic populations that are little inclined to militancy. The governments in Rabat and Tunis are secular and have historically cooperated openly with the United States. Tunisia has played key roles in monitoring extremist operations in Sudan and in helping to facilitate Libya's change of heart on weapons of mass destruction. The United States will have to interact subtly with these two states — hoping not to enrage the populace — and limit its action to low-level clandestine operations such as intelligence-sharing and training intelligence and counterterrorism operatives.

Algeria presents much more fertile ground for the United States. Algiers has years of experience [combating Islamic extremism](#) and has engaged in a civil war against Islamist extremists. The Algerian government is relatively stable, has control of its population, has been a [reliable and eager partner of the United States](#) and would likely give the United States a much freer hand to carry out counterterrorism operations within its borders and regionally. The Algerian government continues to struggle with the internal threat of Islamic militancy and has already assisted in the U.S. war on terrorism. It will be more than amenable to increasing military cooperation and its support of U.S.-led operations in the region.

- Libya** would be the jewel in the North African crown for the United States. Since announcing its [national change of heart](#) on weapons of mass destruction, **Libya** has been touted by the United States and the United Kingdom as a paramount example of the success of the war on terrorism. The United States will seek to exploit Libya's transformation from **scoundrel** to **sidekick**.

Libya — due to its previous overt and covert associations with extremist groups regionally and abroad — possesses vast intelligence that could provide the United States with a deadly weapon as it seeks to expand into a new battlefield. Also, Libya's secular nature and its desire to reconcile with the West give the United States a government willing to prosecute the war against militants on its own with minimal U.S. involvement. **Libya** is also in the position of having been the anti-Islamist sponsor of secular terrorist organizations that might have been affiliated indirectly with Islamist militants.

Additionally, Libya's [continental influence](#) will be assessed as the United States seeks to acquire senior partners in the African endgame. Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi has long seen himself as the primary voice of Africa and carries substantial sway in the fledgling African Union. If the United States can secure a public counterterrorism alliance with Tripoli, it will resonate throughout the continent — likely paving the way for operations and alliances throughout Africa.

- Libya** has evolved into a mid-level power player beyond Africa. Gadhafi's influence spreads from [South America](#) to [Southeast Asia](#), implying that securing **Libya** as an ally not only opens up North Africa to U.S. intervention but also grants the United States a relatively capable global ally as well.

Extremist organizations such as al Qaeda will exploit the lawless Wild West atmosphere that is prevalent in much of Africa to create regional sanctuaries. Neither the United States nor its allies currently possess the operational bandwidth to deal with this stewing threat directly. However, pro-U.S. North African governments are in a position to align closely with the United States and earn a seat at the war-on-terrorism table.

[Libya and America: From foe into friend? | The Economist](http://www.economist.com/node/941021)

<http://www.economist.com/node/941021>

• **Libya and America**

From foe into friend?

Libya tries to climb back into America's good books

Jan 17th 2002

- LAST week Libya and America were talking to each other in London about ways to remove Libya's name from the roster of states sponsoring terrorism, where it has been for 22 years. The talks, their second since September 11th, were led by Richard Burns, the State Department's Middle East man, and Musa Kusa, Muammar Qaddafi's trusted head of external intelligence.
- Removing the 22-year-old tag comes at a price. America, and Britain too, demand that Libya accepts responsibility for the crimes of its officials in bombing a Pan-Am jet over Lockerbie—a convenient formula for absolving Mr Qaddafi of personal blame—and that it pays compensation for what happened. While all involved appear keen on a resolution, nobody seems ready to budge ahead of a final judgment on the Lockerbie bombing.
- The appeal of Abdelbaset Megrahi, the Libyan intelligence agent convicted of mass murder, opens on January 23rd and is expected to last four weeks. Libya's ambassador to London, Muhammed Alzawai, is already reported as saying that his country would pay compensation should Mr Megrahi finally be found guilty. In America's courts, the victims' families are again pressing claims for a payout of \$10 billion.
- This is a hefty sum, but still less than the country's annual oil revenue. Libya has billions of dollars frozen in America, plus billions more held in foreign reserve, and diplomats say the sum is negotiable. Although his sanctions-suffering people may resent seeing more of their wealth diverted abroad, Mr Qaddafi may judge it a fair price to pay for the lifting of UN sanctions and the return of an American ambassador to Tripoli after a 30-year absence.
- Bilateral ties have been buoyed by the common war on Islamist militants. Since September 11th, Mr Qaddafi has been straining to present himself as America's friend. He condemned the suicide attacks as “horrific” and described American retaliation as an act of self-defence. It is reported that Libya supplied America with intelligence on Osama bin Laden's allies in the Philippines, where Libya had posed as an honest hostage-broker with the Abu Sayyaf group. In return, America has added the Islamic Fighting Group, Libya's most effective opposition, to its terror list.
- Hand-in-hand with his drive for international rehabilitation, Mr Qaddafi appears bent on an uncharacteristically normal process of internal reform. Reports from Libya speak of a steady dismantling of the worldwide *mathaba*, the revolutionary cells policing his reign of terror. In their place, say dissidents in London, Mr Qaddafi is seeking to restore power to the armed forces. Since an aborted military coup in October 1993, Libya's army has been little more than a motley crew of rival militias.
- But how readily can the Great Leader shed his revolutionary stripes? In Tripoli, words rarely match the deeds. The minister of finance, sentenced to one year's prison for corruption amid a flurry of publicity last November, retains his cabinet post. And for all the talk of an end to revolutionary zeal, Mr Kusa, the Americans' chief negotiating partner, is the head of the *mathaba* and a one-time self-declared assassin of Libyan dissidents in London.

[Al Qaeda Plants Its Flag in Libya | VICE](http://www.vice.com/read/al-qaeda-plants-its-flag-in-libya)

<http://www.vice.com/read/al-qaeda-plants-its-flag-in-libya>

- [**News**](#)

Al Qaeda Plants Its Flag in Libya

By Sherif Elhelwa



It was here at the courthouse in Benghazi where the first spark of the Libyan revolution ignited. It's the symbolic seat of the revolution; post-Gaddafi Libya's equivalent of Egypt's Tahrir Square. And it was here, in the tumultuous months of civil war, that the ragtag rebel forces established their provisional government and primitive, yet effective, media center from which to tell foreign journalists about their "fight for freedom."

But according to multiple eyewitnesses—myself included—one can now see both the Libyan rebel flag *and* [the flag of al Qaeda](#) fluttering atop Benghazi's courthouse.

- According to one Benghazi resident, Islamists driving brand-new SUVs and waving the black al Qaeda flag drive the city's streets at night shouting, "Islamiya, Islamiya! No East, nor West," a reference to previous worries that the country would be bifurcated between Gaddafi opponents in the east and the pro-Gaddafi elements in the west.



Earlier this week, I went to the Benghazi courthouse and confirmed the rumors: an al Qaeda flag was clearly visible; its Arabic script declaring that "there is no God but Allah" and a full moon underneath. When I tried to take pictures, a Salafi-looking guard, wearing a green camouflage outfit, rushed towards me and demanded to know what I was doing. My response was straightforward: I was taking a picture of the flag. He gave me an intimidating look and hissed, "Whoever speaks ill of this flag, we will cut off his tongue. I recommend that you don't publish these. You will bring trouble to yourself."



He followed me inside the courthouse, but luckily my driver Khaled was close by, and interceded on my behalf. According to Khaled, the guard had angrily threatened to harm me. When I again engaged him in conversation, he told me "this flag is the *true* flag of Islam," and was unresponsive when I argued with him that historically Islam has never been represented by a single flag. The guard claimed repeatedly that there is no al Qaeda in Libya, and that the flag flying atop the courthouse is "dark black," while the al Qaeda flag is *charcoal* black. To many locals, it's a distinction without a difference. One man approached me with a friendly warning: "I recommend that you leave now; [the Islamist fighters] could be watching you."

- But none of this should be surprising. In Tripoli, Abdelhakim Belhaj, a well-known al Qaeda fighter and founder of the notorious Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), is now leading the rebel "military counsel" in Tripoli. A few weeks ago, Belhaj ordered his fighters to take command of the Tripoli airport, then controlled by a group of Zintan fighters, a brigade of Berber Libyans who helped liberate the capital from Gaddafi loyalists. A few days later, Belhaj gave a speech emphasizing that his actions had the blessings of Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC), who appointed him to the leadership of Tripoli's military command.

According to a Libyan who didn't want to be named, a special military group inside the NTC is calling on Salafi fighters with military backgrounds to join a special group fighting in the rebellion. "There will be special benefits if you join whether you die in battle, or when you return home," including monthly salaries. (One NTC source told me that Belhaj's fighters are the only rebel fighters who receive a monthly salary.)



In a recent speech heralding the new beginning of post-Gaddafi Libya, Moustafa Abdeljalil, the head of the NTC, declared the country an "Islamic state, and sharia law is the source of all our laws." It was indeed an odd declaration for a leader celebrating his country's liberation, leading many to wonder: Who are Abdeljalil and the NTC trying to appease?

- It isn't uncommon to discover rebels with radical backgrounds. In an off-the-record interview, one NTC member spoke casually of his past, explaining that the Gaddafi regime blacklisted him from the country for his ties to LIFG. He told me of his close association with Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, the infamous "blind cleric" jailed for his involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, who he helped ferry across the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan during the *mujahedeen* fight against the Soviet Union.

The war to rid the country of the Gaddafi dictatorship might have ended, but the battle for control of post-revolutionary Libya has only just begun. And it will surprise few that assorted radicals, jihadists, Salafists, and LIFG veterans are attempting to fill the power vacuum and replace one dictatorship with another.

[Exclusive: Concern grows over militant activity in Libya - Reuters](http://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-concern-grows-over-militant-activity-libya-222520018.html;_ylt=AtPL6AfoNuG5DmLiGg7CSyqwag8F;_ylu=X3oDMTQ0MXVmcGJrBG1pdANBcnRpY2xlIFNlY3Rpb24gV29ybGQEcGtnA-;_ylg=X3oDMTJ0bGZkMWVnBGludGwDdXMEbGFuZwNlbi11cwRwc3RhaWQDZjNmYmEwODgtOGU5Yi0zZjkwLWJMTQtnZc0NGU3YjM5ZmJl-;_ylv=3)

http://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-concern-grows-over-militant-activity-libya-222520018.html;_ylt=AtPL6AfoNuG5DmLiGg7CSyqwag8F;_ylu=X3oDMTQ0MXVmcGJrBG1pdANBcnRpY2xlIFNlY3Rpb24gV29ybGQEcGtnA-;_ylg=X3oDMTJ0bGZkMWVnBGludGwDdXMEbGFuZwNlbi11cwRwc3RhaWQDZjNmYmEwODgtOGU5Yi0zZjkwLWJMTQtnZc0NGU3YjM5ZmJl-;_ylv=3

[Libyan rebel commander admits his fighters have al-Qaeda links - Telegraph](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8407047/Libyan-rebel-commander-admits-his-fighters-have-al-Qaeda-links.html)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8407047/Libyan-rebel-commander-admits-his-fighters-have-al-Qaeda-links.html>

- **Libyan rebel commander admits his fighters have al-Qaeda links**

Abdel-Hakim al-Hasidi, the Libyan rebel leader, has said jihadists who fought against allied troops in Iraq are on the front lines of the battle against Muammar Gaddafi's regime.



- Mr al-Hasidi admitted he had earlier fought against 'the foreign invasion' in Afghanistan Photo: AFP
- By [Praveen Swami](#), Nick Squires and Duncan Gardham

5:00PM GMT 25 Mar 2011

- In an interview with the Italian newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*, Mr al-Hasidi admitted that he had recruited "around 25" men from the Derna area in eastern [Libya](#) to fight against coalition troops in Iraq. Some of them, he said, are "today are on the front lines in Adjabiya".

Mr al-Hasidi insisted his fighters "are patriots and good Muslims, not terrorists," but added that the "members of [al-Qaeda](#) are also good Muslims and are fighting against the invader".

His revelations came even as Idriss Deby Itno, Chad's president, said al-Qaeda had managed to pillage military arsenals in the Libyan rebel zone and acquired arms, "including surface-to-air missiles, which were then smuggled into their sanctuaries".

Mr al-Hasidi admitted he had earlier fought against "the foreign invasion" in [Afghanistan](#), before being "captured in 2002 in Peshwar, in [Pakistan](#)". He was later handed over to the US, and then held in Libya before being released in 2008.

US and British government sources said Mr al-Hasidi was a member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, or LIFG, which killed dozens of Libyan troops in guerrilla attacks around Derna and Benghazi in 1995 and 1996.

- Even though the LIFG is not part of the al-Qaeda organisation, the United States military's West Point academy has said the two share an "increasingly co-operative relationship". In 2007, documents captured by allied forces from the town of Sinjar, showed LIFG emmbers made up the second-largest cohort of foreign fighters in Iraq, after Saudi Arabia.

Earlier this month, al-Qaeda issued a call for supporters to back the Libyan rebellion, which it said would lead to the imposition of "the stage of Islam" in the country.

- British Islamists have also backed the rebellion, with the former head of the banned al-Muhajiroun proclaiming that the call for "Islam, the Shariah and jihad from Libya" had "shaken the enemies of Islam and the Muslims more than the tsunami that Allah sent against their friends, the Japanese".

[FAIR Blog » Blog Archive » The Libya Rebels and Al-Qaeda, Anonymously](#)

<http://www.fair.org/blog/2011/08/31/the-libya-rebels-and-al-qaeda-anonymously>

[Libya rebel commander contends was tortured, rendered by CIA | The Envoy - Yahoo! News](#)

<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/envoy/libya-rebel-commander-contends-tortured-rendered-cia-153037850.html>

[BBC News - Fears over Islamists within Libyan rebel ranks](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14728565)<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14728565>[Asia Times Online :: THE ROVING EYE: How al-Qaeda got to rule in Tripoli](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/MH30Ak01.html)http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/MH30Ak01.html[Commander who liberated Tripoli was LIFG leader - Threat Matrix](http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2011/08/commander_who_liberated_tripoli.php)http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2011/08/commander_who_liberated_tripoli.php

• Commander who liberated Tripoli was LIFG leader

By Bill Roggio August 25, 2011 1:22 PM

- The commander of the unit that liberated Tripoli from longtime President Muammar Gaddafi and helped storm his compound was a senior military leader in the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. Ironically enough, the commander, Abd al Hakim Bilhaj, had been freed from custody back in 2010 by Gaddafi's son, Saif al Islam, as part of an amnesty program. At the time, Bilhaj and more than 200 other LIFG fighters claimed to have renounced the use of violence. From *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (a translation from an Arabic version of the article):
- Abd-al-Hakim Bilhaj, commander of the revolutionaries' military council in Tripoli who emerged as the commander of the operation to liberate the Libyan capital at the Bab-al-Aziziyah battle before two days, was the amir of the Islamic Fighting Group [LIFG] which used to be called extremist...

Bilhaj was born in 1966, is a civil engineer graduate, and married to two women, one Moroccan and the other Sudanese. He left for Afghanistan in 1988 to take part in the Afghan jihad at that time and then traveled to several Islamic countries, among them Pakistan, Turkey, and Sudan. He was arrested in Afghanistan and Malaysia in 2004 and American intelligence interrogated him in Thailand before handing him over to Libya in the same year. He was released in Libya in 2008 and announced his renunciation of violence in 2009.

Bilhaj is known among the Islamic trends' circles as "Abi-Abdallah al-Sadiq" and he turned from being a hunted man in the LIFG into a hero who the revolutionaries handed the banner of liberating Tripoli.

[Shifting loyalties among Libya's Islamists - LIBYA - FRANCE 24](http://www.france24.com/en/20110805-libya-uprising-islamists-rebels-ntc-gaddafi-fighters-transition-council-shifting-allies?ns_linkname=20110805_libya_uprising_islamists_rebels_ntc_gaddafi&ns_campaign=editorial&ns_mchannel=reseaux_sociaux&ns_sc)http://www.france24.com/en/20110805-libya-uprising-islamists-rebels-ntc-gaddafi-fighters-transition-council-shifting-allies?ns_linkname=20110805_libya_uprising_islamists_rebels_ntc_gaddafi&ns_campaign=editorial&ns_mchannel=reseaux_sociaux&ns_sc

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Shifting loyalties among Libya's Islamists

- The shifting battle lines of the anti-Gaddafi struggle have seen old Libyan Islamist fighters regroup and reconfigure their agendas to join the rebel ranks of the current uprising. But who controls yesterday's foes, who are now today's allies?
- It was a seemingly stunning reversal that was met with large doses of scepticism. But it nevertheless exposed some little-known facts about an ally the international community has trustingly supported for the past few months.

In a rambling midnight [interview with the New York Times last week](#), Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's newly bearded son Saif al-Islam revealed that his father's regime is allying with radical Islamists among the rebel ranks.

Gaddafi has a bloody track record with Islamists, and the Libyan leader has repeatedly blamed al Qaeda for the current uprising in invective-riddled speeches vowing to crush his Islamist opponents.

In the past, Gaddafi has lived up to his word, with brutal crackdowns against homegrown Islamists opposing his regime in eastern Libya. But that was in the 1990s and few were paying attention.

But if Saif al-Islam is to be believed, his father is now cutting deals with his longtime domestic foes.

Saif al-Islam's midnight musings would have been summarily dismissed were it not for last month's [mysterious killing of the top Libyan rebel commander](#), General Abdel Fattah Younes, in the rebel capital of Benghazi.

- **A semi-independent Islamist brigade**

General Younes' death has produced a cascade of often conflicting explanations by the rebels' National Transitional Council (NTC).

While some NTC officials have blamed a "fifth column" of Gaddafi loyalists, Ali Tarhouni, the NTC's oil minister, [told reporters that Younes was murdered by "renegade" members](#) of the Abu Obeida Ibn al-Jarah brigade.

Named after one of the Prophet Mohammed's companions and most successful military commanders, the Abu Obeida Ibn al-Jarah brigade is an Islamist faction that is one of at least 30 semi-independent militias operating in rebel-held eastern Libya, according to Noman Bentoman, a senior analyst at the London-based counter-extremism think tank, the Quilliam Foundation.

"The military structure of the Libyan rebels has two elements," Bentoman explained in a phone interview with FRANCE 24. "There are the professional soldiers under the National Liberation Army, of which General Younes was the supreme commander. The Obeida Ibn al-Jarah brigade is not part of the National Liberation Army. They're operating as what you would call 'independent revolutionaries'."

Bentoman said many such brigades were formed after the anti-Gaddafi uprising broke out in February when a power vacuum formed in the eastern part of the country. "Every city in eastern Libya has these brigades, made up of non-professional soldiers," he said. "They're basically just locals who are not trained and don't have fighting experience."

- **Old Islamists under a new name**

Bentoman was a former commander in the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), a jihadist group that emerged in the early 1990s among Libyans who fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan and then returned to Libya, where they waged a violent insurgency against Gaddafi's regime.

Once close to Osama bin Laden and senior al Qaeda leaders, Bentoman quit the LIFG shortly after the 9/11 attacks and is now a prominent critic of Islamist violence.

According to Bentoman, the LIFG disbanded in August 2009, but during the current uprising it has regrouped under a new name: Al-Haraka Al-Islamiya Al Libiya Lit-Tahghir, or the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change. Many of the new group's leaders and members, Bentoman notes, have now joined the Libyan rebels.

"We definitely know that Islamists are fighting within the rebel ranks," said Barak Barfi, a research fellow with the Washington, DC-based New America Foundation. "It's also been clear from the outset that the Europeans didn't know who they were dealing with. [French President Nicolas] Sarkozy and [British Prime Minister David] Cameron didn't know the people on the ground."

But Barfi is careful to stress that there is no evidence that the Islamists among the Libyan rebels have al Qaeda links. "They see themselves as local and nationalist in character," he said. "They are not spearheading an internationalist jihadist line. They are not against the US, as long as there are no American troops on the ground."

Bentoman shares Barfi's opinion. "Are there Islamists and jihadists in Libya? Yes, of course," he said. "But they use the term 'jihad' as a 'just war' for their homeland, not as a transnational crusade."

Most of the members of the newly named Libyan Islamic Movement for Change, Bentoman maintains, are fighting with the Libyan rebels as part of the NTC. "They accept the idea of a new democratic Libya and have adapted to the new environment and the different challenges," he said.

- **Former US foes turn friends – sort of**

Circumstances can change dramatically in the life of a fighting man, posing new challenges that sometimes see old foes fighting on the same side while former allies may be found on the opposite side of the battle lines.

Over the past few months, US officials have acknowledged that at least one former detainee at Guantanamo Bay once deemed an enemy of the United States has now turned into an ally, of sorts.

Abu Sufian Ibrahim Ahmed Hamuda bin Qumu, a former LIFG militant who was captured in Pakistan after 9/11 and detained at Guantanamo until his 2007 release has joined the Libyan rebel ranks, according to US media reports.

[In an April report, the New York Times revealed](#) that Qumu – who failed to show up for an interview with the paper's

correspondent – now leads the Derna Brigade.

Another Libyan who has acknowledged being in Afghanistan and Pakistan until the 2001 US invasion is Abdul-Hakim al-Hasadi.

Like Qumu, al-Hasadi belongs to the Derna Brigade, which goes by the official name of the “Martyrs of Abu Salim Brigade”, after the infamous Abu Salim prison in Tripoli, the site of a 1996 prison massacre.

- **Derna, a hotbed of Islamists**

A derelict town east of Benghazi, Derna has a reputation as a hotbed of Islamic resistance dating back to the anti-colonial struggle against the Italians. Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, a number of the city’s fighting sons returned home to stage an uprising against the Gaddafi regime in the 1990s.

Gaddafi succeeded in brutally crushing the uprisings by the “Libyan Afghans” as they were called, with Derna bearing the brunt of a range of draconian measures aimed at intimidating its inhabitants into submission.

With the crackdown whittling away at the LIFG, several fighters made their way back to then Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, where a handful of Libyans – such as [Abu Yahya al-Libi](#) – climbed to al Qaeda’s top ranks.

After the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, Derna caught the attention of Western counterterror experts when an analysis of 600 suicide bombers [showed that the tiny Mediterranean town of around 100,000 people had contributed the most suicide bombers](#), more than major Arab metropolises with populations running into the millions.

These days, Derna is acutely aware of its notoriety as an Islamist hotbed. Foreign reporters visiting the dusty town are greeted with a neatly printed banner across the town mosque that reads, in English: “We refuse to be linked with al Qaeda and other terrorist groups”.

- **Renouncing al Qaeda**

In the past, the LIFG was viewed as an al Qaeda-linked group, a relationship that earned the organisation a spot on the [US State Department's list of foreign terrorist organisations](#).

But a number of former LIFG members, many of them living in the United Kingdom, maintain that they have renounced al Qaeda.

- While most experts concede that the LIFG is defunct and its new avatar has severed ties to al Qaeda, not much is known about the degrees to which different factions fighting under the NTC umbrella have renounced, accommodated, moderated or whitewashed their Islamist ideologies.

In the Libyan eastern coastal region of Cyrenaica, where Islam has historically provided the rallying cry against all manner of oppression – from the anti-colonial struggle to anti-Gaddafi uprisings – Islamist fighters are widely viewed as patriots among the local populace.

The NTC has been at pains to present the anti-Gaddafi rebel movement as a unified, liberal, secular movement to its Western backers. But General Younes’ murder has exposed the gap between rhetoric and reality, with US and European officials now questioning the NTC’s ability to manage the factions under its control.

“The NTC has been aware of the situation and how dangerous it might be. The assassination of General Younes has made it crystal clear,” said Bentoman. “The NTC has tried many times to bring all the fighters under their control. They have created what is called a ‘*saraha al-thuwar*,’ or a unified command for all the revolutionaries. But while some brigades have cooperated with the NTC, others have refused.”

This does not bode well for either the NTC or the international community supporting its cause.

[Why the Libya War? - John Rosenthal - National Review Online](#)

<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/273495/why-libya-war-john-rosenthal>

- John Rosenthal

- August 3, 2011 4:00 A.M.
 - Why the Libya War?
 - Did Italy press the U.S. to intervene — or vice versa?
- Back in late March, shortly after the start of the NATO bombing campaign against Libya, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates [told Meet the Press](#) that the U.S. had no “vital interest” in the country. The remark famously inspired Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to cut in and attempt to explain why, then, the United States was getting involved. Secretary Clinton’s explanation was that the Libyan campaign was in the vital interest of America’s NATO allies and that they had asked for U.S. support. “When it comes to Libya,” she said, “we started hearing from the U.K., France, Italy, other of our NATO allies. This was in their vital national interest.”
- Secretary Clinton’s inclusion of Italy in the list was dubious to begin with. In fact, from the start of the unrest in Libya, the Italian government warned about taking sides in the conflict and supporting the rebellion. For example, in [an interview published on February 23](#) in the Italian daily *Il Corriere della Sera*, Foreign Minister Franco Frattini alluded to the creation of an “Islamic Emirate” in the eastern-Libyan heartland of the rebellion. “We do not know more [about it],” Frattini told *Il Corriere*. “But we know that they are dangerous. There are elements of al-Qaeda there.”
- The Italian government’s caution was hardly surprising, given that the February 17 protests that sparked the rebellion were called to commemorate protests five years earlier that had culminated in the storming of the Italian consulate in Benghazi by an angry mob. Several local residents were killed when Libyan security forces attempting to protect the consulate opened fire on the mob. The outrage of the protesters was tied to the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad by the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* and other European newspapers. (On the 2006 protests, see my article [“Our Principles? The Libyan Insurrection and the Mohammed Cartoons.”](#))

The Italian reluctance to support a military intervention also had to do with fears of seeing such an intervention provoke an exodus of tens of thousands of refugees from Libya, many of whom would inevitably end up in Italy. These fears have proven well founded.

- But now, according to [a report](#) in the Saturday edition of *Il Corriere della Sera*, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has confided to colleagues not only that he was opposed to the NATO intervention in Libya, but that he was pressured into making available Italian military capabilities by precisely the United States. According to the report, Berlusconi recalled that “at the time I had warned our international partners, and also at home I had explained that the operation would not be easy . . .” “But,” Berlusconi is reported to have continued, “in the face of the pressures exerted by the United States, the position of [Italian president Giorgio] Napolitano, and the vote [in favor of the intervention] by our parliament, what could I do?”

In 2008, the Berlusconi government had concluded a “partnership and friendship” treaty with Qaddafi’s Libya. According to *Il Corriere*, the Italian prime minister now fears that the Libyan ruler wants to have him killed. “Now there is a risk that Qaddafi will stay [in power],” Berlusconi is supposed to have said, “and the person who was our best friend in the region has become our worst enemy. Italy has been harmed.”

Berlusconi had already stated publicly, in early July, that he “was and is” opposed to the intervention in Libya but that he had been “forced” to provide Italian support. At the time, however, he emphasized that the principal promoter of the war was an unnamed European government, not the United States.

- Following the publication of the report in *Il Corriere*, the Italian government issued a statement dismissing press accounts of Berlusconi’s private remarks as “fantasy” and specifically denying “supposed revelations concerning Qaddafi.” In response, *Il Corriere* issued [a statement](#) explaining that the paper “understands the expediency” of the government’s denial, but noting that the sources for its report are “prominent members of the government and of the PDL [Berlusconi’s party] who met with the prime minister.”

Whatever the truth of that, we may be sure that Secretary Clinton’s claim — that Italy pressed the United States to intervene — is fantasy indeed.

— John Rosenthal writes on European politics and transatlantic security issues. You can follow his work at [www.trans-int.com](#) or [on Facebook](#).

[Libya rebels say Younis killers were 'Islamist element' | World news | guardian.co.uk](#)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/30/libya-general-younis-islamists-blamed>

• Libya rebels say Younis killers were 'Islamist element'

National Transitional Council minister says rebel-aligned Obaida Ibn Jarrah group murdered defector from Gaddafi regime

- - Staff and agencies
 - [guardian.co.uk](#), Saturday 30 July 2011
 - The gunmen who shot dead the Libyan rebels' military chief [Abdul Fatah Younis](#) were members of an Islamist-linked militia allied to the campaign to overthrow [Muammar Gaddafi](#), according to a National Transitional Council minister.
- [After 24 hours of confusion surrounding the death](#), the NTC's oil minister, Ali Tarhouni, said Younis had been killed by members of the Obaida Ibn Jarrah Brigade, a militia named after one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad,

suggesting that Islamist elements were involved.

Tarhouni told reporters in Benghazi that a militia leader who had gone to fetch Younis from the frontline had been arrested and had confessed that his subordinates carried out the killing. "It was not him. His lieutenants did it," Tarhouni said, adding that the killers were still at large.

The NTC leader Mustafa Abdul Jalil said on Thursday that Younis had been recalled for questioning to Benghazi but was killed before he arrived. Relatives said they retrieved a burned and bullet-riddled body.

- The Gaddafi government has said the killing is proof the rebels are not capable of ruling [Libya](#). Spokesman Moussa Ibrahim said: "It is a nice slap [in] the face of the British that the [NTC] they recognised could not protect its own commander of the army."

Ibrahim said Younis was killed by al-Qaida, repeating a claim that the group is the strongest force within the rebel movement. "By this act al-Qaida wanted to mark out its presence and its influence in this region," he said, adding: "The other members of the National Transitional Council knew about it but could not react because they are terrified of al-Qaida."

- Younis's death has raised fear and uncertainty in Benghazi, the rebel stronghold. Thousands marched behind his coffin, wrapped in the rebels' tricolour flag, to the graveyard for his burial, chanting that he was a martyr "beloved by God". Troops fired a military salute as the coffin arrived, and angry and grieving supporters fired wildly into the air with automatic weapons.

At the graveside, Younis's son, Ashraf, broke down in tears as they lowered the body into the ground. And in a startling and risky display in a city so allied to the rebel cause, pleaded hysterically for Gaddafi's return to bring stability back to Libya. "We want Muammar to come back! We want the green flag back!" he shouted at the crowd, referring to Gaddafi's national banner.

Younis's death appeared to shake both the NTC and its western allies, who have heavily backed the rebels controlling most of eastern Libya.

- Two weeks ago 32 nations including the US made a major commitment by formally recognising the NTC as the country's legitimate government. On Wednesday [the British foreign secretary, William Hague, declared the council Libya's "sole governmental authority"](#) and invited the body to set up full diplomatic relations with London.

Western worries will likely be deepened if Younis's death opens major splits among the fractious rebels. Divisions would also weaken the opposition's campaign to oust Gaddafi, which has largely stalled in a deadlock despite the four-month-old Nato bombing campaign against regime forces.

In Washington, state department spokesman Mark Toner said the circumstances of Younis's death remained unclear. He pressed the opposition to shore up any cracks in their front against Gaddafi. "What's important is that they work both diligently and transparently to ensure the unity of the Libyan opposition," Toner said.

[Exiled Islamists Fuel Libyan Revolution - Africa - News - OnIslam.net](#)

<http://www.onislam.net/english/news/africa/453089-exiled-islamists-fuel-libyan-revolution.html>

- Exiled Islamists Fuel Libyan Revolution
- Tuesday, 19 July 2011
- CAIRO – Hiding for years from tyrant Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, members of Islamic groups are coming to light from their forced exile as real patriots to map out freedom fighters' strategy against the current authoritarian rule.

"We are part of the Libyan people and we just want to help our country," Abu Sohaib, not his real name, a senior commander of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, told the New York Times on Tuesday, July 19.

- The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group was formed in 1995 with the goal of ousting Colonel Qaddafi.

Daring to protest against Gaddafi in the 1990s, members of the Islamic group were captured and died in Abu Salim prison in Tripoli.

Ever since, they hid from Qaddafi security forces in the caves in Damah until the Libyan revolution, giving them opportunity to come out to be celebrated as patriots.

Exiled for years in London away from his homeland, Abu Sohaib and a dozen or so former commanders make up a rear-guard headquarters for revolution fighters.

Some of those commanders even shuttle between London and Benghazi to strategize and share donations collected from the Libyan expatriate community in Britain.

Yet, Abu Sohaib, banned from Libya and its neighbors, could not join those shuttle missions to his home country.

He spends most of his time online to keep in contact with friends on the ground there and follow Libya news.

- "I would like to be there myself; I tried to go," he said, pausing to look at the car keys in front of him.

"But Tunisia and Egypt wouldn't let me in even after their revolution."

Scrambled to save his 42-year regime, Gaddafi has launched a deadly crackdown on protestors who demand an end to his rule of the oil-rich Arab country.

Estimates say that at least 10,000 people have been killed in the bloody crackdown.

Five months into the revolt against his rule, Gaddafi is still holding doggedly onto power despite weeks of NATO strikes on his military and command structures.

The conflict has now reached a stalemate, with Gaddafi in control of most of the west of the country, while the opposition is hemmed in to their stronghold in the east and a few pockets in the west.

- **Distrust**

Driven into the mountains or exile by Libyan security forces, the group's members were among the first to join the fight against Qaddafi security forces.

"We wanted to live in a country in which we can live and promote Islam the way it should be," said Abu Sohaib.

"We are sure Islam is good for everyone."

A soft-spoken man in his mid-40s, Abu Sohaib recalls times when Britain wanted to hand him over to Gaddafi.

"There was a time when the British wanted to hand us over to Muammar el-Qaddafi, though they knew we would be tortured," he said, staring at his hands.

Though cooperating with them, American intelligence officials are still worried about members of the group, who received training in Pakistan tribal region.

- Abu Sohaib insists that he and his brethren have severed ties with Al Qaeda and have warned the terrorist group it is not welcome in Libya.

"It has been made very clear to them, that it is better for them to stay out of the country," he said.

That distrust was shared by Libyan fighters, who still question the motive behind the NATO operation into Libya.

"We start to question the true intentions of the West in Libya," a 36-year-old Libyan associated with the fighting group who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Salah and who travels between Europe and Libya said.

"If they would have wanted to kill Muammar el-Qaddafi, they could have done it several times," Abu Salah added.

"I guess this is about making as much money with oil and weapons deals as possible."


Abu Sohaib recalls the cooperation between the US and Libyan authorities to combat terrorism after Libya disbanded its unconventional weapons program in 2003.

"Isn't it interesting how they were hunting us for years and were working with Muammar el-Qaddafi?" said

"Now we are cooperating with NATO and the West, those who used to put us in jail."

[Al Qaeda smuggling weapons out of Libya: Italian minister - World news - Europe - msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43723821/ns/world_news-europe)

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43723821/ns/world_news-europe

- Al Qaeda smuggling weapons out of Libya: Italian minister
-  **REUTERS**

updated 7/12/2011

- [ALGIERS](#) — Islamist extremists in the Sahara desert have exploited the chaos in Libya to acquire weapons from the north African country, Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini said on Tuesday.

"Extremists in the Sahel region have taken advantage of the conflict in Libya to get arms," Frattini told a media conference during a visit to Algeria.

Algerian officials have previously warned that al Qaeda's north African branch is smuggling weapons out of Libya to its base in the Sahara.

Frattini's comments were the first time a senior Western official has acknowledged explicitly and publicly that this has taken place.

[Spain: al-Qaida possibly buying Libyan war weapons - Yahoo! News](http://news.yahoo.com/spain-al-qaida-possibly-buying-libyan-war-weapons-135738437.html)

<http://news.yahoo.com/spain-al-qaida-possibly-buying-libyan-war-weapons-135738437.html>

• Spain: al-Qaida possibly buying Libyan war weapons



By [CIARAN GILES](#) - Associated Press

- MADRID (AP) — Sophisticated Libyan army weapons are being trafficked and possibly sold to al-Qaida's affiliate in

North Africa, giving the group the potential to increase instability in a key part of the continent, Spain's interior minister said Thursday.

Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba said al-Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb, or AQMI, is a growing menace that could conceivably spread outside its natural homeland of the Sahel region of Africa unless Western countries step up efforts to counter it.

He briefed reporters during a break in a meeting with colleagues from five other EU countries and U.S. Homeland Security Director Janet Napolitano.

- The countries agreed among other things to set up a permanent coordination mechanism for their countries' liaison people in the Sahel region — the vast, bone-dry stretch of land just below sub-Saharan Africa that includes countries such as Mauritania, Niger, Mali and Chad.

They also agreed to reach out to the African Union to step up joint counterterrorism efforts, Perez Rubalcaba said.

Perez Rubalcaba said fairly sophisticated weapons from Libyan army forces fighting to keep Moammar Gadhafi in power as rebel forces try to oust him are being sold by traffickers at Libya's southern border and possibly ending up in the hands of AQMI.

"The Libyan crisis is having an influence on AQMI," he said. "One that we find particularly negative is the possible appearance of arms from the Libyan army, or what remains of it, in the hands of terrorists."

- The Libyan civil war is giving AQMI potential to increase its influence in the Sahel region, where it is active after having first surfaced in Algeria.

"Organized crime would probably grow because it is clear they are linked, and risks for Europe and the United States would grow," Perez Rubalcaba said.

Besides Rubalcaba and Napolitano, the meeting was attended by representatives of Italy, Germany, France, Britain and Poland.

Napolitano stressed the need to step up security against terrorists targeting the transport of goods across the world.

"The global supply chain security issue is one of our priorities," Napolitano told The AP in an interview.

- "We had been working on this before last October but when AQAP — al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula — had hidden bombs in two toner cartridges that were put in air cargo it illustrated that they were willing to try to blow up a plane, be it a passenger plane or a cargo plane. So we accelerated our efforts in this regard."

Napolitano said material confiscated at the compound where Osama bin Laden had been living in Pakistan — and killed in a U.S. raid in early May — confirmed Washington was on the right track, adding that the material mentioned surface transportation as a target for attack.

She said the U.S. government was in contact with domestic and international air, land and sea transport institutions to see how best to minimize this threat.

"There's much that can be done," she said. "The movement of cargo around the world supplies the international economy and you have got to make sure that there is security in that movement because jobs depend on it, manufacturing depends on it."

[Libya Leon Panetta: Libya rebel council may include extremists, Leon Panetta says - latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-libya-panetta-20110610,0,5838562.story)

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-libya-panetta-20110610,0,5838562.story>

• Libya rebel council may include extremists, Panetta says

CIA Director Leon Panetta told lawmakers that worries about some members of the Libyan rebels' ruling body are 'legitimate.'

- By Paul Richter, Los Angeles Times

June 10, 2011

Reporting from Washington—

[President Obama](#)'s nominee for secretary of Defense, [Leon Panetta](#), told the Senate that he is concerned that some leaders of [Libya's](#) opposition may be extremists, even as officials disclosed that U.S. aid for those fighting [Moammar Kadafi](#) will fall far short of what the rebel group says it needs.

- Panetta, currently the [CIA](#) director, told lawmakers during his confirmation hearing Thursday that worries about some members of the rebels' ruling body, the [Transitional National Council](#), are "legitimate" and that U.S. officials are

"watching very closely."

Panetta was given a friendly reception in the one-day hearing, and his confirmation by the full Senate appears assured.

At a foreign ministers meeting in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, of nations fighting Kadafi's regime, [Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) said the United States would give \$26 million in humanitarian relief for Libya, bringing total U.S. aid to \$81 million.

Other countries, including Italy, France, Australia and Turkey, also made pledges of aid at the conference totaling \$1.1 billion.

But legal hurdles must be cleared before the money can be delivered. And the total is far less than the \$3 billion the rebels have said they need to run a government and wage war for even a few months.

- The rebel council's finance chief, Ali Tarhouni, said outside the meeting that supportive governments have been promising aid since the armed uprising erupted in February, but that "it's been almost four months now and nothing has materialized," the Associated Press reported.

Panetta's concern about the rebel council reflects ambivalence in the Obama administration. Senior officials have praised the group's motives and goals, now referring to it as "the legitimate interlocutor for the Libyan people," though not a government.

Yet U.S. officials also continued to voice uncertainties about the group's membership and its ability to govern. They have moved cautiously in providing money to support it.

Clinton told reporters that the combination of daily airstrikes and stiff economic sanctions is grinding down Kadafi's regime. She said people close to Kadafi have had "numerous and continuing discussions" with foreign diplomats about arranging a transition to a new government, though there is "not any clear way forward yet."

She said defections had cost Kadafi two foreign ministers, an interior minister, ambassadors to the [United Nations](#) and the United States, an oil minister, five generals "and, just this week, his labor minister defected as well."

[Al Qaeda Confirms its Role with Libya Rebels | UNCOVERAGE.net](#)

<http://www.uncoverage.net/2011/04/al-qaeda-confirms-its-role-with-libya-rebels>

• Al Qaeda Confirms its Role with Libya Rebels

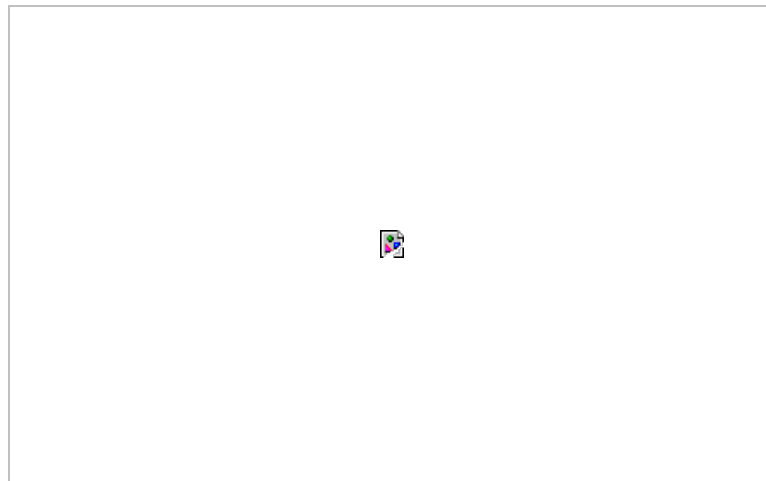
Posted on [April 19, 2011](#) by [Jane Jamison](#)

- This story comes from Georges Malbrunot Le Figaro blog, translated by Google.

[Al Qaeda has offices in Libya: Doesn't Want U.S., NATO "Help"](#)

It was arguably obvious before the United States undertook "humanitarian" war in Libya that Al Qaeda was behind the Libyan rebels trying to oust Muammar Gaddafi.

Al Qaeda's leadership of the rebels is unquestioned now. The terrorist organization has confirmed which Libyan cities where it maintains "offices" (emirates.) It also says quite vehemently that it does not appreciate U.S., French and NATO involvement and would prefer to die as "martyrs" rather than work with the "Crusaders."



Abdel Hakim al-Hasidi Source: U.K. Telegraph

- Further, it is confirmed now by Al Qaeda, that Col. Abdel-Hakim al-Hasidi, [who recently gave an extended interview to the U.K. Telegraph](#), is an Al Qaeda imam operating out of Derna. [In the interview, Al-Hasidi had admitted recruiting at least 25 Al Qaeda to Derna. The article described him as a member of "LIFG" Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, a branch of Al Qaeda.]
- This open admittance of Al Qaeda involvement in and goals for Libya come from an interview with Abi Saleh Mohammed with a Saudi newspaper, translated and reported by [Georges Malbrunot at Le Figaro blog](#):

The media officer in the North African branch of al-Qaeda gave an interesting interview with the Saudi newspaper Al-Hayyat published in London.

Abi Saleh Mohammad said there that the terrorist organization has offices (the emirates in the language of al-Qaeda) in Benghazi, Al Bayda, Al Marj, and especially Derna Shihata.

"We are especially present at Derna where Sheikh Abdul Hakim is our Emir and where he trained – along with other brothers – an Islamic council to govern the city under the Sharia, Islamic law, said Mohammad Abi Saleh .

To the east of Libya, the host city of al-Qaida correspond to the main strongholds of the rebels, backed by the Western coalition. **The head of al-Qaida also confirms that the terrorist organization has recently acquired weapons**, "to protect our soldiers and to defend the banner of Islam." Dignitaries Algeria and Chad had been worried about such arms transfers to al-Qaida.

- This implementation of al-Qaeda in Libya is the origin of Western reservations about the delivery of arms to the rebels, who are struggling to dislodge Colonel Gaddafi in Tripoli power. We reported in early April, recalling the high proportion of Libyan jihadists went to fight U.S. troops in Iraq (see note 2 April).

Asked whether foreign intervention in Libya was positive and helped to prevent the forces from committing a massacre Gaddafi in Benghazi, the representative of al-Qaeda responds unequivocally:

"It is always better to die a martyr rather than seek help from the Crusaders. If the rebels had waited a little, Gaddafi's troops were defeated. We do not consider foreign intervention in Libya as positive. Criminals (loyal to Qadhafi, ed) and the unholy alliance (forged between the National Transitional Council, recognized by France in particular, note) are our enemies, and we can beat them."

[MI6 'halted bid to arrest bin Laden' | Politics | The Observer](http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2002/nov/10/uk.davidshayler)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2002/nov/10/uk.davidshayler>

• MI6 'halted bid to arrest bin Laden'

Startling revelations by French intelligence experts back David Shayler's alleged 'fantasy' about Gaddafi plot

- - [Martin Bright](#), home affairs editor
 - [The Observer](#), Sunday 10 November 2002 0
- British intelligence paid large sums of money to an al-Qaeda cell in Libya in a doomed attempt to assassinate Colonel Gaddafi in 1996 and thwarted early attempts to bring Osama bin Laden to justice.

The latest claims of MI6 involvement with Libya's fearsome Islamic Fighting Group, which is connected to one of bin Laden's trusted lieutenants, will be embarrassing to the Government, which described similar claims by renegade MI5 officer David Shayler as 'pure fantasy'.

The allegations have emerged in the book *Forbidden Truth*, published in America by two French intelligence experts who reveal that the first Interpol arrest warrant for bin Laden was issued by Libya in March 1998.

- According to journalist Guillaume Dasquié and Jean-Charles Brisard, an adviser to French President Jacques Chirac, British and US intelligence agencies buried the fact that the arrest warrant had come from Libya and played down the threat. Five months after the warrant was issued, al-Qaeda killed more than 200 people in the truck bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The arrest warrant was issued in connection with the murder in March 1994 of two German anti-terrorism agents, Silvan and Vera Becker, who were in charge of missions in Africa. According to the book, the resistance of Western intelligence agencies to the Libyan concerns can be explained by MI6's involvement with the al-Qaeda coup plot.

- The Libyan al-Qaeda cell included Anas al-Liby, who remains on the US government's most wanted list with a reward of \$25 million for his capture. He is wanted for his involvement in the African embassy bombings. Al-Liby was with bin Laden in Sudan before the al-Qaeda leader returned to Afghanistan in 1996.

Astonishingly, despite suspicions that he was a high-level al-Qaeda operative, al-Liby was given political asylum in Britain and lived in Manchester until May of 2000 when he eluded a police raid on his house and fled abroad. The raid discovered a 180-page al-Qaeda 'manual for jihad' containing instructions for terrorist attacks.

- The Observer has been restrained from printing details of the allegations during the course of the trial of David Shayler, who was last week sentenced to six months in prison for disclosing documents obtained during his time as an MI5 officer. He was not allowed to argue that he made the revelations in the public interest.

During his closing speech last week, Shayler repeated claims that he was gagged from talking about 'a crime so heinous' that he had no choice but to go to the press with his story. The 'crime' was the alleged MI6 involvement in the plot to assassinate Gaddafi, hatched in late 1995.

- Shayler claims he was first briefed about the plot during formal meetings with colleagues from the foreign intelligence service MI6 when he was working on MI5's Libya desk in the mid-Nineties.

The Observer can today reveal that the MI6 officers involved in the alleged plot were Richard Bartlett, who has previously only been known under the codename PT16 and had overall responsibility for the operation; and David Watson, codename PT16B. As Shayler's opposite number in MI6, Watson was responsible for running a Libyan agent, 'Tunworth', who was providing information from within the cell. According to Shayler, MI6 passed £100,000 to the al-Qaeda plotters.

- The assassination attempt on Gaddafi was planned for early 1996 in the Libyan coastal city of Sirte. It is thought that an operation by the Islamic Fighting Group in the city was foiled in March 1996 and in the gun battle that followed several militants were killed. In 1998, the Libyans released TV footage of a 1996 grenade attack on Gaddafi that they

claimed had been carried out by a British agent.

Shayler, who conducted his own defence in the trial, intended to call Bartlett and Watson as witnesses, but was prevented from doing so by the narrow focus of the court case.

During the Shayler trial, Home Secretary David Blunkett and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw signed Public Interest Immunity certificates to protect national security. Reporters were not able to report allegations about the Gadaffi plot during the course of the trial.

- These restrictions have led to a row between the Attorney General and the so-called D-Notice Committee, which advises the press on national security issues.

The committee, officially known as the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Advisory Committee, has objected to demands by the prosecution to apply the Official Secrets Act retrospectively to cover information already published or broadcast as a result of Shayler's disclosures. Members of the committee, who include senior national newspaper executives, are said to be horrified at the unprecedented attempt to censor the media during the trial.

- Shayler claims Watson later boasted that there had been MI6 involvement in the Libyan operation. Shayler was also planning to call a witness to the conversation in which the MI6 man claimed British intelligence had been involved in the coup attempt.

According to Shayler, the woman, an Arabic translator at MI5, was also shocked by Watson's admission that money had been paid to the plotters.

- Despite the James Bond myth, MI6 does not have a licence to kill and must gain direct authorisation from the Foreign Secretary for highly sensitive operations. Malcolm Rifkind, the Conservative Foreign Secretary at the time, has repeatedly said he gave no such authorisation.

It is believed Watson and Bartlett have been relocated and given new identities as a result of Shayler's revelations. MI6 is now said to be resigned to their names being made public and it is believed to have put further measures in place to ensure their safety.

- A top-secret MI6 document leaked on the internet two years ago confirmed British intelligence knew of a plot in 1995, which involved five colonels, Libyan students and 'Libya veterans who served in Afghanistan'.

Ashur Shamis, a Libyan expert on radical Islam said: 'There was a rise in the activities of the Islamic Fighting Group from 1995, but many in Libya would be shocked if MI6 was involved.'

[Contacts between insurgents and al Qaeda for the announcement of jihad in Libya - Atlas Shrugs](http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2011/05/contacts-between-insurgents-and-al-qaeda-for-the-announcement-of-jihad-in-libya.html)

http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2011/05/contacts-between-insurgents-and-al-qaeda-for-the-announcement-of-jihad-in-libya.html

• Tuesday, May 24, 2011

Contacts between insurgents and al Qaeda for the announcement of jihad in Libya

- More of Obama's special brand of genius:

[Libya, Arsenal for AQIM](#) Ennahar

Libya could become an arsenal for Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and a place of attraction for the international anti-Western jihad, warned Tuesday the coordinator of the fight against terrorism in the EU. * "We have several subjects of concerns," said Gilles de Kerchove during a speech to the European Parliament meeting in committees in Brussels. "Libya and Yemen, became very weak state, tribal, could become failed states and places of attraction for international jihad," he said. "The weapons looted in the Libya arsenals, and some are very sophisticated, are likely to fall in the hands of AQIM," he added.

[Contacts between insurgents and al Qaeda for the announcement of jihad in Libya](#) Ennahar Online

"Abu Muslim al Djazairi", a member of the legal commission of the organization al Qaeda, called Libyan insurgents to proceed with the formation of an armed organization and quit the opposition of the National Council of Transition, whom he accuses of allegiance to the West.

- Abu Muslim El Djazairi, the number two in the tribune "Menbar Ettawhid wel Jihad," after Al Maqdic, considered an important member of Al Qaeda organization, responding to a letter sent by a Libyan insurgent who called himself "Abu Djendel Ellib" has advised him to proceed in the formation of an armed organization that would combine the real revolutionaries, insisting that this should be done in the utmost discretion because, as he said, the fight has not yet begun. Abu Muslim advised the insurgents also to coordinate their efforts with other terrorist organizations that activate in other regions.

Ennahar/ Agencies

- [Back on March 2011: MEMRI](#)

*On March 28, 2011, the Salafi-jihadist website Al-Tawhid published two conflicting fatwas in response to a question about whether it is permissible to obtain aid from NATO forces to oust the regime of Mu'ammar Al-Qadhafi in Libya. Two senior jurisprudents, **Sheikh Abu Muslim Al-Jazairi** and Sheikh Abu Mundhir Al-Shinqiti, both members of the website's Shari'a Council, agree that Muslims are forbidden from forming alliances with infidels. However, while Al-Jazairi considers the ban to be absolute and unbending, Al-Shinqiti believes that in cases of extreme necessity – such as the "imminent destruction" the Libyan people are facing at the hands of the Al-Qadhafi regime – **it is permissible to obtain help even from an enemy and to return to fighting this enemy once the danger has passed.***

Accusing the Libyan National Interim Council of "serving the enemy's interests," Al-Jazairi calls upon it to step down and disclose the promises it had given "the enemies." He calls on the Libyan people to instate shari'a law in the country, saying that this is the only thing that will guarantee them sovereignty and freedom in their land. He also calls upon the Libyan revolutionary youth to put their faith in Allah, establish a new council, and demand that the NATO forces withdraw from the fight immediately. He also urges them to "unite under the flag of monotheism" and fulfill their duty to their faith and to the Muslim ummah.

[...]

Following are the main points of both fatwas:

- **Al-Jazairi to Libyan Rebels: Do Not Ally Yourself with the Enemy; Unite under the Flag of Monotheism**

An inquirer calling himself Mudammir Al-Kufr ("Destroyer of Unbelief") asks how one must act in the event of a ground incursion into Libya of "the crusader armies and their Arab allies." He wonders whether the Libyans should fight these forces at once, or should wait until the latter destroy the tyrant Al-Qadhafi and withdraw from Libya, fighting them only if they do not. He asks if this Western intervention, aimed at attacking Al-Qadhafi, is considered an occupation of Libya, which requires waging jihad to defend it.

Al-Jazairi responds that Allah forbade Muslims from befriending the hypocrites and infidels or from confiding in them, and, all the more so, from trusting them in issues of the Muslim *ummah*. He says that he himself already warned the Libyan National Interim Council of the consequences of obtaining assistance from infidels, which he termed "a disgraceful crime," and which he said would prevent the youth of the revolution from making autonomous decisions in the post-Qadhafi era. He also claims that ever since the council had begun talks with the "enemies," and their delegates had met with the French president, the rebels had been losing ground.

- Al-Jazairi attacks International Union of Muslim Scholars head Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradhwai for supporting the assistance from Western forces – based on the claim that it had come at the request of the Libyan revolutionary youth, with the authorization of the Arab League and under the aegis of the U.N., and that it was not intervention by a specific country but by the international community. Al-Jazairi claims that this crusader intervention opened the door to evil in the Islamic Maghreb region, just as the Saudi regime had opened such a door in the Gulf, and wonders who authorized the Libyan National Interim Council to speak in the name of all the revolutionary youth. He also asks since when the Arab League has cared about the Muslim *ummah* and why, if the latter is capable of recruiting the crusader military forces, it does not do so against the Jews in Palestine. Regarding the claim that the intervention is by the international community, rather than a specific country, Al-Jazairi says that the same thing happened in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that, nonetheless, there is no question that these two countries today are occupied – the same fate, he says, that awaits Libya if it allows the intervention of NATO forces there.

Calling on the Libyan National Interim Council to disclose the promises it has given the "enemies," he says that all the council's members must step down from their posts, which they have used "to serve the enemy's interests."

- To the Libyan people, Al-Jazairi says that victory is solely in Allah's hands, and adds that victory does not mean ousting Al-Qadhafi only to replace him with "[another] agent of France or Britain." It means, rather, "being masters and free men in your own land – which will only happen by instating the law of Allah [in Libya]."

He urges the Libyan revolutionary youth to follow the guidelines of Allah, who banned forming alliances with the enemy, and calls upon them "to demand that these enemies withdraw immediately from this battle." He tells them to

put their trust in Allah as they have done in the past, to renounce the Libyan National Interim Council if it "persists in standing alongside the enemy and handing it the reins of the Libyan regime," and to establish "a different council, based on the Koran and the Sunna, whose aim is the instatement of Allah's law."

Finally, Al-Jazairi calls on the revolutionary youth to "unite under the flag of monotheism," join ranks, and clearly define their goals – because, he says, the battle is nigh and many of the Libyans' Arab brothers await their permission to enter Libya and join them. He concludes by emphasizing the Libyan monotheists' duty to their faith and the Muslim *ummah*.

• **Al-Shinqiti: We Must Now Eliminate the Al-Qadhafi Regime; After Its Removal, It Will Be Time to Fight the West**

An inquirer calling himself 'Ibada ("Work of the Creator") asks what the Libyan rebels should do at present, in light of the fact that obtaining assistance from NATO forces to stop Al-Qadhafi's attacks is forbidden according to the Prophet Muhammad's ban on accepting help from polytheists. He wonders if the rebels should have responded to the aerial bombardment by NATO forces with artillery and firearms, and if they must forgo their desire to topple Al-Qadhafi as quickly as possible simply because this interest coincides with the West's interest to topple him for its own reasons. He asks if it is not better to first actualize the rebel interest to eliminate Al-Qadhafi and only then fight the West.

- Al-Shinqiti responds that the Libyans are subject to aggression at the hands of a murderous, barbaric regime which is undeterred by reason, religion, or morality, and that the duty to defend Libyan cities from ruin permits accepting assistance from polytheists. He says that any people facing imminent annihilation cannot but welcome any help, including assistance from the enemy, and that any expectation that such a people will behave differently is unrealistic, at least from the point of view of those at risk.

He says that if Western intervention is limited to striking Al-Qadhafi's forces, without ground incursions into Libyan territory, it serves the interests of the rebels, and asks, "What's wrong with one of our enemies attacking another and sparing us from harm [at the hands of the latter]?" Al-Shinqiti adds that as long as the Al-Qadhafi regime still stands, the rebels are incapable of controlling Libya or defending it from foreign ambitions. Likewise, he says, the annihilation of the Libyan people at Al-Qadhafi's hands is far worse than the threat of foreign ambitions, since it is obvious from the West's response to the situations in Bosnia and the Gulf that it "intervenes solely for its own interests... [rather than for] the protection of the innocent, [considering that the innocent] are massacred by [the West] in Iraq and Afghanistan, just as they are [massacred] with its support in Palestine."

- Al-Shinqiti claims that the West is intervening in Libya against Al-Qadhafi for a number of reasons, including its fear that the situation will create a new set of circumstances under which a new Taliban could emerge in the region; its desire to guarantee the flow of oil to the West; and its hope to take part in shaping the new country in a way that will serve its own interests. He says: "Whatever the West's motive for intervening, we must now eliminate the danger of the tyrant [Al-Qadhafi]. After he is removed, all the West's ulterior motives will be revealed, and then the time to fight it will come."

Al-Shinqiti concludes by saying: "Ultimately, if the rebels can defend the people against the tyrant [Al-Qadhafi's] weapons by any [other] means, they are forbidden from accepting Western assistance. However, if they are prevented from defending the people, then [Western] assistance becomes a necessity. Nevertheless, keep in mind that such an alignment of interests with the West does not clear the [West] of its definition as one who usurps from and is hostile to the Muslim *ummah*, as long as it is killing Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq and defending the Jews in Palestine."

[Tunisia arrests al Qaeda suspects carrying bombs | Reuters](http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/15/us-libya-tunisia-arrest-idUSTRE74E18S20110515)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/15/us-libya-tunisia-arrest-idUSTRE74E18S20110515>

- Tunisia arrests al Qaeda suspects carrying bombs
- TUNIS | Sun May 15, 2011
- (Reuters) - Tunisian security forces have arrested two people suspected of being members of al Qaeda near the Libyan border who were carrying an explosives belt and several bombs, a security source told Reuters on Sunday.

The men, thought to be members of al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM), were arrested near Ramada in the south of the country.

The men were carrying Afghan identity papers and were of Libyan and Algerian origin, the source said, adding that they were also connected to two men arrested in [Tunisia](#) last week.

Arab and Western officials have said that al Qaeda could be exploiting the Libyan conflict to acquire weapons and smuggle them into other countries.

A senior security official in Algeria told Reuters last month there were signs al Qaeda was working to acquire arms to smuggle them to a stronghold in northern Mali.

Tunisian authorities have called on the public to report any suspect activity and warned them not to shelter any foreigners who might threaten national security.

The North African country, which is an important destination for Libyan migrants fleeing the conflict, has tightened security along its border with Libya since the start of the unrest, searching cars and questioning people trying to cross.

[Al Qaeda's wanna-be Arab Spring | The Examiner | Beltway Confidential | San Francisco Examiner](http://www.sfoxaminer.com/blogs/beltway-confidential/2011/04/al-qaeda-s-wanna-be-arab-spring)

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- Al Qaeda's wanna-be Arab Spring
- By: James Jay Carafano 04/20/11
- Will the uprising in Libya turn the country into the terrorist Disneyland? Let's consider some musings from think tanks in the U.S. and Europe.
In an article for The Jamestown Foundation, journalist Camille Tawil concluded that Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, a group affiliated with Osama bin Laden, has "failed in its attempts to expand its theater of operations to the rest of the Arab countries that make up the Maghreb, a region that consists of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania."
Her full report, "The Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb: Expansion in the Sahel and Challenges from Within Jihadist Circles," was published in April 2010. A lot has happened in the last year, though.
Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, a research fellow at the London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, tries to update the situation in the April 18 report "Western Jihad Interpretations of Libyan Uprisings."
He writes: "Despite being initially sluggish and incoherent, al-Qaeda's response to the Arab Spring is now taking shape."
- Senior leadership figures, including Ayman al-Zawahiri and Libyan born Abu Yahya al-Libi, as well as a many lesser known Salafi-jihadi ideologues, have given a number of sermons concentrating almost solely on Libya and portraying it as the most fertile ground for their global movement.
Their Western followers are making a similar case on Salafi-jihadi internet forums." According to Meleagrou-Hitchens, even the Arab street finds these claims unconvincing. He sees little hard evidence of a prominent place for Islamist groups in the forces fighting the regime.
On the other hand, there are increasing calls in Internet chat rooms for foreign fighters to take their cause to Libya, Meleagrou-Hitchens notes.
As reported previously on Beltway Confidential, "Having set up a pipeline to bring fighters out of Libya, al Qaeda affiliates may well attempt to reverse the flow and bring fighters into the country. It would take time, of course. And such a maneuver may not become apparent for weeks or even months after it begins."
It's increasingly apparent that the war in Libya will likely drag on for some time, and so a new wave of terrorism in North Africa has to be an increasing concern.
Though the Libyan Interim Transitional National Council has pledged to keep its ranks "terrorist free," that proclamation may not mean much if the group lacks the capacity to govern and provide security for the areas under its control.
Worse, we can expect a continuing and unending stream of disinformation from Tripoli attempting to portray all the rebels as terrorists. Disneyland or no, the ride may be just beginning.

[Al-Qaeda Rising in Libya? | The Foundry](http://blog.heritage.org/2011/05/20/al-qaeda-rising-in-libya)

<http://blog.heritage.org/2011/05/20/al-qaeda-rising-in-libya>

• Al-Qaeda Rising in Libya?

Posted May 20th, 2011 at 2:09pm in [Protect America](#)

- The Arab Spring may be becoming a long hot summer.

In the President's major speech on the Middle East yesterday, it seemed pretty clear that he has moved on from Libya and turned his attention back to the Arab-Israeli peace process. Attention deficit disorder, however, may not be the right answer.

- There is a [disturbing news report](#) that two men arrested in Tunisia were "suspected of being members of al-Qaeda." They were picked up near the Libyan border "carrying an explosives belt and several bombs, a security source told Reuters.... The men were carrying Afghan identity papers and were of Libyan and Algerian origin, the source said, adding that they were also connected to two men arrested in [Tunisia](#) last week.... The North African country, which is an important destination for Libyan migrants fleeing the conflict, has tightened security along its border with Libya." If these men turn out to be part of concerted effort to inject al-Qaeda into the Libyan civil war, then that is a sign that things are going to get a lot worse before there is any hope that they get better.
- As reported previously in the *San Francisco Examiner's* [Beltway Confidential](#):

Having set up a pipeline to bring fighters out of Libya, al Qaeda affiliates may well attempt to reverse the flow and bring fighters into the country. It would take time, of course. And such a maneuver may not become apparent for weeks or even months after it begins.

It's increasingly apparent that the war in Libya will likely drag on for some time, so a new wave of terrorism in North Africa has to be an increasing concern. Though the Libyan Interim Transitional National Council has pledged to keep its ranks "terrorist free," that proclamation [may not mean much](#) if the group lacks the capacity to govern and provide security for the areas under its control.

[Mounting evidence of CIA ties to Libyan rebels](http://www.wsfs.org/articles/2011/apr2011/libya-a04.shtml?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Net+News+Global&utm_term=Net+News+Global&utm_content=New)

<http://www.wsfs.org/articles/2011/apr2011/libya-a04.shtml>

[utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Net+News+Global&utm_term=Net+News+Global&utm_content=New](http://www.wsfs.org/articles/2011/apr2011/libya-a04.shtml?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Net+News+Global&utm_term=Net+News+Global&utm_content=New)

• Mounting evidence of CIA ties to Libyan rebels

By Patrick Martin
4 April 2011

- Numerous press reports over the weekend add to the evidence that the Libyan rebels fighting the regime of Muammar Gaddafi are under the direction of American intelligence agencies. Despite the repeated claims by Obama administration officials that the rebels are a largely unknown quantity, it is becoming increasingly clear that key military leaders of the anti-Gaddafi campaign are well known to the US government and have longstanding relations with the CIA.

For better than two weeks there had been a virtual ban in the US media on reporting the name of Khalifa Haftar, the long-time CIA collaborator who was appointed chief rebel commander March 17, on the eve of the US-NATO bombing campaign against Libya. Only the regional McClatchy Newspapers chain reported Haftar's appointment, and ABC News ran a brief interview with him on March 27. Otherwise, silence prevailed.

This de facto censorship abruptly ended April 1, when a right-wing US think tank, the Jamestown Foundation, published a lengthy study of Haftar's background and record, which was cited extensively by [Reuters news service](#), and then more widely in the US and British media.

- The Jamestown Foundation report declared: "Today as Colonel Haftar finally returns to the battlefields of North Africa with the objective of toppling Gaddafi, his former co-conspirator from Libya's 1969 coup, he may stand as the best liaison for the United States and allied NATO forces in dealing with Libya's unruly rebels."

The Jamestown study noted Haftar's role in organizing the Libyan National Army (LNA), which he founded "on June 21, 1988 with strong backing from the Central Intelligence Agency," and cites a 1991 interview with him "conducted in an LNA camp in rural Virginia." Not only did the CIA sponsor and fund the LNA, it engineered the entry of LNA officers and men into the United States where they established a training camp.

Reuters added, using a variant spelling of the name, that it has "repeatedly asked for an interview with Hefta but he could not immediately be contacted." The news service added, "The CIA declined to comment" on its relationship to the former Libyan military leader.

- Other references to Haftar's role appeared in the [online blog of the New Yorker magazine](#), in [Africa Confidential](#), on [National Public Radio](#), the British daily [Guardian](#), and in the [Independent on Sunday](#), another British newspaper.

The *Independent* column, headlined "The Shady Men Backed by the West to Displace Gaddafi," described the Libyan rebel commanders as follows: "The careers of several make them sound like characters out of the more sinister Graham Greene novels. They include men such as Colonel Khalifa Haftar, former commander of the Libyan army in Chad who was captured and changed sides in 1988, setting up the anti-Gaddafi Libyan National Army reportedly with CIA and Saudi backing. For the last 20 years, he has been living quietly in Virginia before returning to Benghazi to lead the fight against Gaddafi."

Finally, the *Washington Post's* Sunday edition carried several references to Haftar, including a front-page article profiling the divisions within the rebel military leadership. "Khalifa Haftar, a former army colonel who recently returned to Libya after living for many years in Falls Church, was initially hailed by the Transitional National Council as a leader who could help discipline the new army and train its largely volunteer ranks," *Post* reporter [Tara Bahrapour wrote](#).

- She then quoted TNC and rebel military spokesmen giving conflicting accounts, one saying Haftar had been removed from command, the other saying he remained in control of the military. A spokesman for the TNC, asked to explain the conflict in light of its earlier announcement of Haftar's appointment, said, "This is the position of the council today. The situation is fluid.... The political viewpoints change frequently."

Walter Pincus, the *Post's* long-time reporter on intelligence activities, himself a former CIA informer in the National Student Association, described Haftar as "a former Libyan army colonel who for years commanded the Libyan National Army (LNA), an anti-Gaddafi group." [The article](#) said Haftar had "established the LNA, allegedly with backing from the CIA and Saudi elements." It continued: "In 1996, he was reported to have been behind an alleged uprising in eastern Libya. By that time, he was already settled with his family in Falls Church."

According to Pincus, "a senior intelligence official," asked about the Libyan commander's connection to the CIA, "said it was policy not to discuss such issues."

- The informal blackout on Haftar's identity and CIA connections still continues on the American television networks and in the pages of the *New York Times*—a newspaper that openly admits its subservience to the US military/intelligence apparatus. But the significance of the weekend press reports is unmistakable: the Libyan rebel military is not the independent organ of a popular uprising against the Gaddafi dictatorship, but rather the creature of American imperialism, the most reactionary political force on the planet.

The dubious character of the Libyan rebels was further underscored in a remarkable profile published Saturday by the [Wall Street Journal](#) of three Libyans who had fought with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and were now playing major roles in the rebel military effort. Two of the three had been in US custody as alleged Al Qaeda operatives and one spent six years at Guantanamo Bay before being turned over to the Gaddafi regime in 2007. The three men are:

- Abdel Hakim al-Hasady, described as "an influential Islamic preacher and high school teacher who spent five years at a training camp in eastern Afghanistan" and now "oversees the recruitment, training and deployment of about 300 rebel fighters from Darna," a city in eastern Libya
- Salah al-Barrani, "a former fighter from the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, or LIFG," who is Hasady's field commander
- Sufyan Ben Qumu, "a Libyan army veteran who worked for Osama bin Laden's holding company in Sudan and later for an al Qaeda-linked charity in Afghanistan," and who "is training many of the city's rebel recruits."
- Hasady and Ben Qumu were arrested by Pakistani security after the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and turned over to the US. Hasady was transferred to Libyan custody two months later, while Ben Qumu was moved to Guantanamo and held there until 2007, when he, too, was sent to a Libyan prison. The Gaddafi regime released both men in 2008, at a time when US-Libya collaboration in the "war on terror" was at its height. Such an action would certainly have been checked with Washington.

The former Al Qaeda warrior was quite willing to speak to the leading US business newspaper, which reported, "his

discourse has become dramatically more pro-American." He told the *Journal*, "If we hated the Americans 100 percent, today it is less than 50 percent. They have started to redeem themselves for their past mistakes...."

- Whether these individuals are Al Qaeda operatives who were "turned" by their American captors or have simply changed allegiance under changed circumstances is unclear. But their role in the Libyan opposition further undermines the longstanding propaganda of the US government about the supposedly unbridgeable gulf between Al Qaeda and American imperialism.

For a decade, the US government, under Bush and now Obama, has used the terrorist actions of Al Qaeda and its alleged supporters as a pretext for one military intervention after another in the Muslim world—Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, the Philippines, Indonesia and now Libya.

- There has long been reason to doubt the "war on terror" narrative, not least the fact that Al Qaeda was effectively created by the CIA through its activities in recruiting and mobilizing radical Islamists to go to Afghanistan in the 1980s and join the mujaheddin guerrillas fighting the Soviet army there. Many of the 9/11 suicide hijackers were known to the CIA as Al Qaeda operatives, and in some cases under active surveillance, but were nonetheless allowed to enter the country, receive training at US flight schools and carry out the terrorist attacks.

An incident during a hearing Thursday before the House Armed Services Committee demonstrates the sensitivity of the US government concerning the links between US intelligence services and Al Qaeda. Democratic Congressman Brad Sherman questioned a witness, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, about the role of Abdel Hakim al-Hasady. Steinberg refused to discuss the matter, suggesting it could be taken up only in a closed-door session where US covert operations are regularly reviewed.

[US signals caution about Libya military intervention - Yahoo! News](http://ca.news.yahoo.com/us-signals-caution-libya-military-intervention-20110302-182711-743.html)

<http://ca.news.yahoo.com/us-signals-caution-libya-military-intervention-20110302-182711-743.html>

- US signals caution about Libya military intervention
- By Lachlan Carmichael | AFP News – Wed, 2 Mar, 2011
- The United States signaled growing caution about military intervention in Libya while it raised fears that Al-Qaeda could gain a foothold if the North African nation descends into chaos.

In testimony to the US Senate, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned that any US intervention to help opponents of Moamer Kadhafi would be "controversial" both within Libya and the broader Arab community.

- She has said that Washington understands the Libyan opposition wants to "be seen as doing this by themselves" as they seek ways to dislodge Kadhafi and his forces from the capital Tripoli and other areas they hold.
- In a speech on Wednesday, Kadhafi warned that "thousands" would die if the West intervened to support the more than two-week old uprising against him.
- The 22-member Arab League adopted a resolution Wednesday appearing to oppose all foreign intervention in Libya before announcing later it would consider backing a no-fly zone over the fellow Arab country.
- In her Senate testimony, Clinton underlined remarks from US defense leaders who said Tuesday that imposing a no-fly zone would be "extraordinarily" complex and that NATO has yet to agree on any military intervention there.

"There is a great deal of caution that is being exercised with respect to any actions that we might take other than in support of humanitarian missions," the chief US diplomat said when asked about military options for Libya.

She recalled how the former administration of president Bill Clinton, her husband, faced a similar dilemma in the Balkans in the 1990s before eventually deciding a no-fly zone there would advance peace and stability.

Referring to Libya, Clinton told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "I think we are a long way from making that decision."

Despite US caution, she added: "We are taking no option off the table, so long as the Libyan government continues to turn its guns on its own people."

- If the United States and NATO imposed a no-fly zone, US and allied military aircraft would ensure that Kadhafi's warplanes and helicopters were grounded so they cannot attack the Libyan opposition.

The US Senate on Tuesday unanimously passed a symbolic resolution urging the world to consider imposing a no-fly zone over Libya while John Kerry, the Senate committee's Democratic chairman, voiced support for it Wednesday.

"A no fly-zone is not a long-term proposition and we should be ready to implement it as necessary," Kerry said in a statement.

- Two US warships, the USS Kearsage and the USS Ponce, steamed Wednesday into the Mediterranean en route to Libya, the Suez Canal Authority said.

The Kearsage amphibious ready group, with about 800 marines, a fleet of helicopters and medical facilities, could

support humanitarian efforts as well as military operations.

However, US aircraft carriers transporting warplanes rather than helicopters were used to enforce a no-fly zone in southern Iraq in the 1990s.

- In reply to questions about what the Obama administration was doing to fight Al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Africa, Clinton said "one of our biggest concerns is Libya descending into a chaos and becoming a giant Somalia."

"It's right now not something we see in the offing, but many of the Al-Qaeda activists in Afghanistan and later in Iraq came from Libya and came from eastern Libya which is now the so-called free area of Libya," she said.

- Clinton later told the Senate Appropriations Committee the United States is "actively reaching out" to the Libyan opposition.

"We are actively reaching out to Libyans... We are working to understand who is legitimate, who is not, but it is premature in our opinion to recognize one group or another," Clinton said.

- "We have to focus at this point on helping the Libyan people," she said.
- "It's important to recognize that there is a great deal of uncertainty about the motives, the opportunism, if you will of people who are claiming to be leaders right now," she added.
- "I think we have to be focusing on the humanitarian mission and then gathering information as we can," said the top US diplomat.