

NATO'S LIBYA MISSION

Cracking a Hard Nut

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NATO's Libya expedition is over. A "new order" is going to be "stabilized" as the oil domain is being controlled by a new regime under the shadow of war planes from an expeditionary force of intercontinental royal-republican coalition bearing marks of breach and competition.

So, David Cameron paid tribute to the "incredible bravery, professionalism and dedication" of the Royal Air Force pilots in the Libya theater, who safely sitting high above the sky destroyed a former friend with most sophisticated technology. But Mr Cameron has not forgotten to sound the imperial-truth: "This has not been our revolution, but we can be proud that we have played our part." Thus, a formula for "revolution" was brought into existence: Take a vanguard role in a revolution which is not yours.

A few facts presented by mainstream media tell the tale of others' "revolution" in which the oil thirsty imperial powers played a part:

RAF's Sentinel jets flying some seven miles up gathered images of startling clarity of the ground below, and passed on to commanders to choose targets. (BBC News, "On board the RAF's Sentinel R1 spy plane over Libya", May11, 2011)

British special forces soldiers, and former SAS troopers, advised and trained anti-Gaddafi forces (AGF), "although their presence was officially denied. The former British special forces troops were employed by private security companies and funded by a number of sources, including Qatar." They acted "as forward air controllers-directing pilots to targets-and communicating with Nato operational commanders." They came to Libya in Feb, 2011, "even before the UN mandate urging states to protect civilians from Gaddafi's forces." SAS soldiers advised Misrata-based AGF, and helped to pass on details of the locations of Gaddafi's forces to British commanders in the UK and the Naples headquarters of the NATO forces. A number of SAS soldiers advised the AGF as they stormed Tripoli. "France is understood to have deployed special forces in Libya and Qatari and Jordanian special forces are believed to have also played a role." (*The Guardian*, "SAS troopers help co-ordinate rebel attacks in Libya")

For weeks, military and intelligence officers helped "the rebels plan their co-ordinated attack on the capital, and Whitehall sources have disclosed that the RAF stepped up raids on Tripoli on [Aug. 20] in a pre-arranged plan to pave the way for the rebel advance. MI6 officers based in the rebel stronghold of Benghazi had honed battle plans drawn up by [AGF] which were agreed 10 weeks ago. The constantly-updated tactical advice provided by British experts to the rebel leaders centred on the need to spark a fresh uprising within Tripoli [...T]he first phase of the battle for the capital had begun hours earlier, when RAF Tornado GR4 aircraft attacked a key communications facility in south-west Tripoli as part of the agreed battle plan. [...For striking from within Tripoli by the AGF] the agreed signal was a televised speech by the TNC chairman [...] broadcast via the Qatar-based Libya TV [...In] the skies overhead RAF Tornados and Typhoons [launched] further surgical strikes on pre-planned targets. The RAF and its alliance partners carried out 46 sorties on [Aug. 21] alone [...The] Tornados' advanced electronics also enabled [...] to hit Gaddafi targets [...] Gaddafi's command and control centres [...] were also attacked, crippling the [...] ability to direct his troops. [...] William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, confirmed [...] that Britain had equipped the fighters with a range of "non-lethal" kit including advanced telecommunications equipment and 1,000 sets of body armour. They had also been given night vision goggles, [...] (*The Telegraph*, "Libya: secret role played by Britain creating path to the fall of Tripoli", Aug. 23, 2011)

"Nevertheless, it is clear that in the course of this campaign Nato air power has been decisive. [...O]ver days, weeks and months, it has steadily eroded [...] Gaddafi's military machine. Air defences, tanks and armoured vehicles, command centres and ammunition dumps have been systematically destroyed. Over time this steady erosion has taken effect, fundamentally limiting the Gaddafi regime's ability to use its one great advantage—formal military power. [...] Nato commanders believe that the capabilities available in this campaign have enabled them to push the boundaries of what can be achieved by air power." (BBC, "Rebels pushing to secure Tripoli", Aug. 24, 2011)

“NATO and its allies helped Libya’s rebels mount an aggressive ‘pincer’ strategy [...] providing intelligence, advice and stepped-up airstrikes that helped push Moammar Gaddafi’s forces toward collapse in Tripoli, NATO and US officials said [...] Retreating government troops allowed the rebel advance and provided clear targets for NATO airstrikes, the officials said. [...] Most [air strikes] were carried out by NATO and allied aircraft, aided by six armed US Predator drones and satellite imagery on the location and capabilities of government forces. ‘We have a good operational picture of where forces are arrayed on the battlefield’, [...] a Pentagon spokesman, said. [...] British, French and Qatari Special Forces have been operating on the ground in Libya for some time and helped the rebels develop and coordinate the pincer strategy, officials said. At the same time, CIA operatives inside the country—along with intercepted communications between Libyan government officials— provided a deeper understanding of how badly Gaddafi’s command structure had crumbled, according to US officials. The collapse could be traced to ‘two things’, a high-ranking US military official said. ‘One was the knowledge that we had on the disintegration of the command structure of the Gaddafi forces.’ The rebels were emboldened by that information, officials said, gaining confidence that the war was turning in their direction. ‘The second thing, in the lead-up into Tripoli, we really provided a lot of imagery on the locations of the Gaddafi forces’, the official said. ‘So as the rebels were getting into their positions when they came around the south and up into the west side of Tripoli, we had a good sense of where [Gaddafi’s] forces were at.’ [...]he [Obama] administration reached a decision about six weeks ago that enabled the sharing of more sensitive materials with NATO, including imagery and signals intercepts that could be provided to British and French Special Operations troops on the ground in addition to pilots in the air. [...]he NATO allies and ‘particularly the Qataris’ on the ground worked closely with the rebels’ military and political command ‘to help them think this one through and also provide them with the capabilities’, the NATO official said. NATO, whose United Nations mandate is limited to the protection of Libyan civilians, has been anxious not to be seen acting as the rebel air force in a coordinated strategy. But the NATO official acknowledged that ‘‘the effect of what we were doing was not dissimilar.’’ (*The Washington Post*, “Allies guided rebels’ ‘pincer’ assault on capital”, Aug. 22, 2011)

More revelations and secret documents will be following in the coming days. So, the expedition skippers sitting on the other side of the Mediterranean should not be deprived of salutation for all their “bravery” and “far”-sighted leadership.

An old friend turned enemy was driven away from his seat of power to a journey to uncertainty. But the “successful conclusion” of the expedition has brought to surface a few soft facts of friendship with the now despised dictator and a few hard facts of geopolitics.

Citing Gordon Corera *The Independent* tells the soft fact of the secret deals, clandestine contact and friendship between a democracy and a dictatorial rule: “Britain and the Gaddafi regime were not always the enemies they are now. With Tripoli falling and the Gaddafi family on the run, those inside British intelligence who have worked on Libya over the last 10 years might be excused a wry smile at the way events have panned out. Gaddafi has morphed from enemy to friend and back to enemy again in an almost bewildering dance, in which MI6 and Britain’s spies have sometimes been leading and sometimes following. That dance is now approaching its end as the secret service hunts the man with whom it once sat down to deal...” It was about planned weapons of mass destruction, Libya’s then intelligence chief Moussa Koussa, Pakistan’s AQ Khan, etc. “Western oil and gas companies welcomed [Gaddafi] with open arms and Tony Blair visited him in his tent [...]” (“Behind closed doors: The bewildering dance between Gaddafi and MI6”, Aug. 25, 2011)

Simultaneously, as Richard Norton-Taylor pointed out in *The Guardian*, a few hard facts are there. (1) The limit of NATO air power has been exposed. (2) “The Libyan conflict gave birth to a new kind of covert intervention involving military advisers and special forces, not from the US—not even only from European countries, notably Britain’s SAS—but those of Arab countries, notably Qatar and the [UAE].” “[T]he days of conclusive, concerted, action by large military alliances is well and truly over. [‘C]oalitions of the willing’ are the orders of the day [...]” (“Libya: a new breed of military intervention”, Aug. 25, 2011)

Bitter facts to digest are also there: (1) “[I]t was quite clear from the start that regime change was the objective.” “[P]lans for the endgame were being drawn up in detail elsewhere.” (2) “High-level bombing, planning by low-level ground forces and a back seat for the US. This was no great victory for Nato”. “Far from it.” (ibid.) Quoting Michael Clarke, director of the Royal United Services Institute, Norton-Taylor pointed out that “only nine of Nato’s 28 members were prepared to put themselves on the line physically and politically and attack ground targets.” “It is”, Clarke said, “difficult to avoid the conclusion that Nato emerges from this successful operation weaker than it went into it. The military operation itself created an image of Nato’s limitations rather than its power.” (ibid.)

Questions are searching for their answers: (1) Norton-Taylor asks: "Could this combination of high-level bombing and covert intervention and planning by low-level ground forces set the pattern for future conflicts?" (ibid.) (2) What shape shall increased competition among major partners take on the Libyan desert already soaked with blood? (3) What shall be the formula for sharing the loot - oil? (4) Is it possible to thwart social process of rebellion against foreign domination in the mirage of cruel desert? (5) What shall be the implication of the expedition on the continent? (6) How shall other emerging actors in geopolitics react to the outcome of the expedition? (7) Is involvement of operatives and special forces troops part of the UN Security Council no-fly zone resolution? (8) Was there any pogrom of black labor and who should be held responsible, if there is any? (9) Has mainstream media reported all the news-worthy stories? (10) Are other resource-rich "disobedient" regions going to face similar fate?

A political system with distorted social process for attaining the height of modernity through tyrannical rule, brinkmanship, adventurism, and appeasement with the lords of the world order has reached its destiny. But social process shall not cease as labor will produce wealth from beneath the earth. Swearing in the name of martyrs, as the new regime's new finance minister proclaimed in Tripoli, shall not contain contradictions among competing interests within the society and among mining and finance capitals coming into the desert land to have their share. Souls of Omar Mookhtar shall roam on the horizons of the desert, which shall not drink the wine of imposed "democracy" and sham "humanitarianism". A stronger force of resistance shall spread in the land that threw away imperial masters more than once, threw away military base about four decades ago, as the land and the continent once again will find foreign military presence. Same formula does not work everywhere. The formula of Gene Sharp, the propagated guru of recent Arab revolt, has not worked in Libya.

The trample for loot will soon find itself in a labyrinth under a treacherous moonlit desert full with contradictions making it realize that the expedition is not over. The expedition will only encounter hatred, resistance and revolt as social process can never be appropriated, neither with fire power nor with imposed politics.□□□