

BBC “Reveals” After the Facts how British Special Forces Supervised and Spearheaded Libya Rebels to Victory

By [Global Research](#) and [Global Research](#)

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In-depth Report: [NATO'S WAR ON LIBYA](#)

In a failed attempt to appear unbiased and objective, the BBC now “reveals”, almost a year after the information was relayed by several alternative media, that British Special Forces played a key role in steering and supervising Libya’s “freedom fighters” to victory. Known and documented many of these so-called rebels were mercenaries under contract to NATO.

British efforts to help topple Colonel Gaddafi were not limited to air strikes. On the ground – and on the quiet – **special forces soldiers were blending in with rebel fighters:**

This is the **previously untold BBC account** of the crucial role part played by British and Allied Special Forces in leading the insurrection largely integrated by Al Qaedas affiliated operatives:

In the end, though, British special forces were deployed on the ground in order to help the UK’s allies – the Libyan revolutionaries often called the National Transitional Council or NTC. Those with a knowledge of the programme insist “they did a tremendous job” and contributed to the final collapse of the Gaddafi regime. Multiple radios indicate sophisticated co-ordination of forces. The UK’s policy for intervention evolved in a series of fits and starts, being changed at key points by events on the ground. The arguments about how far the UK should go were thrashed out in a series of meetings of the National Security Council at Downing Street. Under the chairmanship of Prime Minister David Cameron, its key members were Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir David Richards Defence Secretary Liam Fox Foreign Secretary William Hague Mr Cameron’s chief of staff, Ed Llewellyn, was a key voice in urging action following start of the Libyan revolution last February, say Whitehall insiders

The existence of E Squadron is well known within the special forces community but has not hitherto been discussed publicly. It was formed five years ago to work closely with the intelligence service MI6, and is mainly involved in missions where maximum discretion is required, say Whitehall insiders.

... Last March’s debacle, in which six members of the squadron were caught in Libya, was highly embarrassing. The reason for their presence, escorting two people from MI6, gives a clue to the facilitating role they often play in foreign intelligence operations in risky places.

According to special forces people, E Squadron is a composite organisation formed from selected SAS, SBS and Special Reconnaissance Regiment operators. It is not technically part of the SAS or SBS, but at the disposal of the Director of Special Forces and MI6.

The squadron often operates in plain clothes and with the full range of national support, such as false identities, at its disposal.

... The first significant involvement of British forces inside Libya was a rescue mission mounted just a couple of weeks after the rising against Gaddafi broke out. On 3 March, Royal Air Force C130 aircraft were sent to a desert airstrip at Zilla in the south of the country to rescue expatriate oil workers. Many had been threatened by gunmen and bandits.

.... Accompanying the flights were about two dozen men from C Squadron of the Special Boat Service (SBS), who helped secure the landing zone. It was a short-term and discreet intervention that saved the workers from risk of abduction or murder, and caused little debate in Whitehall.

Events, though, were moving chaotically and violently onwards, with the Libyan armed forces breaking up and Benghazi emerging as the centre of opposition. The government sought to open contacts with the National Transitional Council both overtly and covertly.

It was the undercover aspect of this relationship that almost brought Britain's wider attempt to help the revolution to grief. The Secret Intelligence Service, or MI6, sought to step up communications with some of its contacts in the opposition. It was decided to send a pair of the service's people to a town not far from Benghazi to meet one of these Libyans.

... In planning this operation, SIS chose to use a highly sensitive arm of the special forces, E Squadron, in order to look after its people. Six members of E Squadron, which is recruited from all three Tier 1 units (SAS, SBS and Special Reconnaissance Regiment) duly boarded the Chinook to "mind" the intelligence people.

They were equipped with a variety of weapons and secure communications gear. In keeping with E Squadron's sensitive role, they were in plain clothes or black jumpsuits (accounts vary), and carried a variety of passports.

The Libyan revolution, like many others, was accompanied by a good deal of paranoia about foreign mercenaries and spies, and the British party could not have appeared more suspicious. They were detained and taken to Benghazi, the men on the ground having decided that to open fire would destroy the very bridge-building mission they were engaged in.

When, on 19 March, Colonel Gaddafi's tanks were bombed as they entered Benghazi, the conflict entered a dramatically different phase. High-profile military action was under way, and the leaders of the UK, US, and France were increasingly committed to the overthrow of the Libyan leader.

Yet key figures in the Downing Street discussions were convinced that air strikes alone would not achieve the result they wanted. At sessions of the National Security Council, Gen Richards and Mr Fox made the case for planning to provide training and equipment for the revolutionary forces of the NTC.

At a meeting near the end of March, we have been told, authorisation was given to take certain steps to develop the NTC's embryonic ground forces. This involved the immediate dispatch of a small advisory team, and the longer-term development of a "train and equip" project. Ministers were advised, say those familiar with the discussion, that this second part of the plan would take at least three months to implement.

The first and most basic task of the advisory team was to get the various bands of Libyan fighters roaring around in armed pick-up trucks under some

sort of central co-ordination. As reporters had discovered, most of these men had little idea of what they were doing, and soon panicked if they thought Col Gaddafi's forces were attacking or outflanking them.

There were a number of legal issues preventing them giving more help. Some Whitehall lawyers argued that any type of presence on the ground was problematic. Legal doubts were raised about arming the NTC or targeting Col Gaddafi.

Once the air operation was put on a proper Nato footing, these issues became even more vexed, insiders say, with the alliance saying it would not accept men on the ground "directing air strikes" in a way that some newspapers, even in late spring, were speculating was already happening.

The British government's desire to achieve the overthrow of Gaddafi while accommodating the legal sensitivities registered by various Whitehall departments led to some frustration among those who were meant to make the policy work.

Misrata rebels used sophisticated range-finders to adjust artillery fire and co-ordinate Nato air strikes "It just seemed to me an unnecessarily muddled way of going about a business that we all knew the underlying aims of," said one. "It was almost as if we have lost the ability to define a clear objective and go for it."

However, the accidental bombing of NTC columns by Nato aircraft in early April provided those who wanted more direct assistance with a powerful argument. British and French officers on the ground were permitted to co-ordinate more closely with the NTC for the purposes of "deconfliction" or preventing such accidental clashes from happening again.

Under the deconfliction rubric, British advisers made their way to places like Misrata, then under siege, where the RAF was focusing its air strikes. The stage was set then for months of bombing which, as it progressed, both exhausted the stocks of precision weapons available to some Nato allies and the patience of many politicians for what was going on. Insiders say that, discreetly, they were soon doing more than deconfliction, actually co-ordinating certain Nato air attacks.

Taking as his cue the March approval in principal for a training programme, Gen Richards had started a series of low profile visits to Doha, the capital of Qatar.

This Gulf emirate had taken a leading role in backing the NTC, and its defence chief was by June brokering an agreement with the UK and France to provide material back-up as well as training for the NTC.

France was to prove more forward-leaning than the UK in this, and by August was providing weapons to NTC units in the Nefusa mountains of western Libya. The UK, meanwhile, had agreed to focus its efforts in the east of the country. It was as part of this new effort that British special forces returned to Libya.

Although plenty of people in Whitehall still remembered the March debacle, it was agreed to allow a limited number of British advisers to take a direct part in training and mentoring NTC units in Libya. Sources say the number of men sent from D Squadron of 22 SAS Regiment was capped at 24. They were performing their mission by late August.

While France and Qatar were ready to provide weapons directly, the UK was not. However, this made little practical difference since the SAS was operating

closely with Qatar special forces who had reportedly delivered items such as Milan anti-tank missiles.

Anti-tank missile in Sirte, of the type believed to have been supplied by Qataris. There were some suggestions from Whitehall that the training itself should be conducted outside Libya in order to remain within the narrow interpretation of the UN resolution, but the SAS was apparently soon present at a base in southern Libya.

... During the months that this project had taken to come to fruition, the slow grinding down of Gaddafi's forces by air attack had continued. Soon after the foreign trainers arrived, NTC units swept into Tripoli.

.... The SAS had meanwhile strayed beyond its training facility, with single men or pairs accompanying the NTC commanders that they had been training back to their units. They dressed as Libyans and blended in with the units they mentored, says someone familiar with the operation.

There had been concerns that they would be spotted by the press, but this did not happen. "We have become a lot better at blending in," says someone familiar with the D Squadron operation. "Our people were able to stay close to the NTC commanders without being compromised."

Instead, as the revolutionaries fought their way into Gaddafi's home town of Sirte, they were assisted by a handful of British and other special forces. Members of the Jordanian and United Arab Emirates armies had fallen in behind the Qataris too.

When, on 20 October, Gaddafi was finally captured and then killed by NTC men, it followed Nato air strikes on a convoy of vehicles carrying leading members of the former regime as they tried to escape from Sirte early in the morning. Had British soldiers on the ground had a hand in this? Nobody will say yet.

In keeping with its long standing policies on special forces and MI6 operations, Whitehall has refrained from public statements about the nature of assistance on the ground. The Ministry of Defence reiterated that policy when asked to comment on this story.

Speaking at a public event late last year, though, Gen Richards commented that the NTC forces "were the land element, an 'army' was still vital". He also noted that "integrating the Qataris, Emiratis and Jordanians into the operation was key". He did not, however, allude to the presence of more than 20 British operators on the ground.

British sources agree Qatar played a leading role - and accept it put more soldiers in than the UK - but question whether the number was this large. Around the more secret parts of Whitehall, the suggestion is that the number committed on the ground by all nations probably did not exceed a couple of hundred.

As for Britain's decision finally to deploy an SAS squadron, "they made a fantastic difference", argues one insider.

It is part of the essence of troops of this kind that they often operate in secrecy, providing their political masters with policy options that they might not wish to own up to publicly.

But given that the UK's earlier relationship with Col Gaddafi and his intelligence services caused great embarrassment, it could be that attention will one day

focus more closely on British assistance to the NTC, particularly if the Libyan revolution comes unstuck.” BBC “ [UK’s secret mission to beat Gaddafi](#)”: (emphasis added)

What is disturbing in this January 2012 scoop BBC is that the facts were known to the Western media in March 2011 and were deliberately withheld until the war was over. Global Research reported on the presence of U.K. Special Forces as far back as early March 2011:

US and allied special forces are on the ground in Eastern Libya, providing covert support to the rebels [...] This was recognized when **British SAS Special Forces commandos were arrested in the Benghazi region**. They were acting as military advisers to opposition forces. (Michel Chossudovsky, [Insurrection and Military Intervention: The US-NATO Attempted Coup d’Etat in Libya?](#), Global Research, March 7, 2011.)

As for the MI6 and the British Special Forces, agents were captured early in March by the rebels who had mistaken them for enemy spies. **British intelligence was allegedly on the ground to establish connections with the rebellion**, which they were apparently not aware of. (Julie Lévesque, [Libya: Media Propaganda and “Humanitarian Imperialism”](#), Global Research, April 10, 2011.)

It has been reported that **dozens of British agents and commandos from MI6, the Special Air Services (SAS) unit, and the Special Boat Services (SBS) units were also operating inside Libya**. (Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, [NATO’s Secret Ground War in Libya](#), May 16, 2011.)

The Western mainstream media’s modus operandi is to create the impression of fair and unbiased reporting when it comes to war coverage: but this reporting is “after the facts” once countless innocent civilians have been killed under NATO’s “humanitarian mandate”.

Only once the targeted leader has been killed or ousted, do we see reports documenting the covert role played by the Western military alliance. The mainstream media only reports long after the facts, once the Western puppet governments are installed.

Before Qaddafi’s assassination, you could not read BBC reports acknowledging a “British campaign to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi’s regime”. It was called a “humanitarian intervention”.

Now it’s Syria’s turn to be the victim of a similar “regime change” supported by an intense media propaganda campaign.

Julie Lévesque and Michel Chossudovsky contributed to this report.

For Global Research on Libya, See our dossier: [NATO’s War On Libya](#).

For “regime change” in Syria see [Syria: NATO’s Next War?](#)

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