

End Game For Benghazi Rebels As Libyan Tribes Prepare To Weigh In

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03 August, 2011 Tripoli : On July 30, the day before this 97.5 per cent Muslim country began the holy month of Ramadan, NATO spokesperson Roland Lavoie has been lamely attempting to explain to the press at the Rixos Hotel and internationally, why NATO was forced to bomb three Tripoli TV towers at the Libyan Broadcasting Authority, killing three journalists/technicians and wounding 15 others. Like most people currently in central Tripoli, this observer was awakened at 1:50 a.m. by the first of a series of nine blasts, three of which I watched from my balcony as they happened, and which seemed to be about 800 yards away as I saw one TV tower being blown apart. On the four lanes' divided highway adjacent to my hotel and below my balcony, that runs along the sea front, I could see two cars frantically swerving left and right as they sped along, presumably trying to avoid a NATO rocket, fearing they themselves might be targeted.

According to NATO spokesperson Lavoie, allowing Libya's population to watch government TV, and by implication, to hear terrorist public service announcements concerning subjects such as gasoline availability, food distribution for Ramadan, updates on areas to be avoided due to recent NATO bombing, prayers and lectures by Sheiks on moral and religious subjects during Ramadan or see the Prayer Times chart posted on government TV, during this month of fasting, plus children's programs and normal programming, had to stop immediately.

The reason to bomb Libyan government TV, according to NATO is that Libyan leader Ghaddafi has been giving interviews and speeches following repeated NATO bombings which recently have included hospitals, Ramadan food storage warehouses, the nation's main water distribution infrastructure, private homes, and more than 1,600 other civilian sites. NATO believes that preventing Qaddafi's use of Libya's public airwaves by bombing transmission towers is within UN resolutions 1970 and 1973, the scope of which are being expanded beyond all recognition from their original intent. NATO spokesperson Lavoie claims that Libya's leadership is using TV broadcast facilities to thwart NATO's "humanitarian mission" and, yet again are, "putting civilian lives at risk."

Government officials admit using the media for communication with the population, including to urge tribal unity, to dialogue with those based in Benghazi referred to here as "NATO rebels", to argue for an immediate ceasefire and yes, even to call for all Libyans to resist what many here, including Colonel Ghaddafi, call "the NATO crusader aggressors." In western Libya, and even among many in the east, according to recent rebel defectors who daily arrive on the western side, NATO has lost the respect of this country, Africa, the Middle East and increasingly the international community. The reasons are well known here and include the serial false premises and descriptions of what happened in February in Benghazi

and Misrata areas.

In addition, NATO daily bombing strikes have increased approximately 20 per cent since July 25 and will continue to increase according to French Defense Minister Gerard Longuet who, along with UK Defense Minister Liam Fox, while publicly saying NATO must continue the bombing, is privately expressing his frustration with the killing of rebel military commander Abdul Fatah Younnis. This assassination, according to Libyan officials was very likely carried out by Younnis' rebel leaders or Al Qaeda. Both are said to feel that the rebel leadership in Benghazi is collapsing. So do many NATO leaders and the Obama Administration.

A former senior member of Britain's Liberal Democratic Party, Sir Menzies Campbell has just urged the UK government to rethink its involvement in the war on Libya. Campbell said Britain must undertake a "wholesale re-examination and review" of its involvement in the NATO conflict in Libya after the murder of the opposition figure and Britain "must think about the end-game of the conflict in Libya.

One Libyan government supporter, who just arrived here in Tripoli, claims he spent the past two months on the ground in Benghazi "undercover" as a liaison between the rebels and NATO. He told his rapt audience at a Tripoli hotel this week many details of what he claims is NATO's frustration with the deterioration, the corruption and incompetence of their "team" in the east and the CIA view that "Al Qaeda will eat Mahmoud Jibril and the entire rebel leadership for Iftar during one of the Ramadan feasts during August. They are just waiting for the right opportunity to make a dramatic move and take control."

Only the zealots of "humanitarian intervention" could seriously have contemplated the kind of protracted, bloody land war in Libya that would have been necessary to win. So, the bet on an alliance with NATO now appears to have been doomed from the start, even on its own terms.

The force that is rapidly entering into this conflict is the leadership of Libya's more than 2000 tribes. In a series of meetings in Libya, Tunisia and elsewhere, the Tribal Council is speaking out forcefully and forging a political block that is demanding an end to Libyans killing Libyans.

Generally considered Libya's largest tribe, are the Obeidis to which the Younnis family belongs. Some of the tribal leaders and members have vowed revenge against rebel leaders and as they carried the coffins of Abdul Fatah and his two companions they chanted, under the gaze of security forces, "the blood of martyrs will not go in vain."

Libya's Tribal Council has issued a manifesto which makes clear that it intends to end this conflict, help expel "the NATO crusaders", achieve reforms while supporting the Gaddafi, Tripoli based government. Before Ramadan is over, it intends to end Libya's crisis even if it needs to rally its hundreds of thousands of active members to march on Benghazi.

NATO, according to various academics at Al Nasser and Al Fatah University, and Libya's Tribal leadership, appear surprisingly ignorant and even contemptuous of this country's tribes and their historic roles during times of crises and foreign aggression and occupation. One tribal leader well known to Italy was Omar Muktar.

As NATO and its backers contemplate their End Game they may want to consider some excerpts from the Libyan Tribal Council's manifesto issued on July 26. Speaking for Libya's

2000 tribes, the Council issued a Proclamation signed by scores of tribal leaders from eastern Libya.

“By this letter to the extraordinary African Summit, convening in Addis Ababa, the notables of the Eastern tribes of the Great Jamahiriya confirm their complete rejection of what is called the Transitional Council in Benghazi which hasn’t been nominated nor elected by Tribal representatives but rather imposed by NATO.”

“What is called the Transitional Council in Benghazi was imposed by NATO on us and we completely reject it. Is it democracy to impose people with armed power on the people of Benghazi, many of whose leaders are not even Libyan or from Libyan tribes but come from Tunisia and other countries.”

“The Tribal Council assures its continuing cooperation with the African Union in its suggestions aimed at helping to prevent the aggression on the Libyan people”....

“The Tribal Council condemns the crusader aggression on the Great Jamahiriya executed by the NATO and the Arabic regressive forces which is a grave threat to Libyan civilians as it continues to kill them as NATO bombs civilian targets.”...

“We do not and will not accept any authority other than the authority that we chose with our free will which is the People’s Congress and Peoples Committees, and the popular social leadership, and will oppose with all available means, the NATO rebels and their slaughter, violence and maiming of cadavers. We intend to oppose with all the means available to us the NATO crusader aggressors and their appointed lackeys”.

According to one representative of the Libyan Supreme Tribal Council, “The tribes of Libya have until today not fully joined in repelling the NATO aggressors. As we do, we serve notice to NATO that we shall not desist until they have left our country and we will ensure that they never return.”

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