

Obama's Bay of Pigs in Libya: Imperialist Aggression Shreds UN Charter

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Global Research, March 22, 2011

<http://tarpley.net/> 22 March 2011

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

On March 19, US and British cruise missiles joined with French and other NATO combat aircraft in Operation Odyssey Dawn/Operation Ellamy, a neo-imperialist bombing attack under fake humanitarian cover against the sovereign state of Libya. Acting under UN Security Council resolution 1973, US naval forces in the Mediterranean on Saturday night local time fired 112 cruise missiles at targets which the Pentagon claimed were related to Libya's air defense system. But Mohammed al-Zawi, the Secretary General of the Libyan Parliament, told a Tripoli press conference that the "barbaric armed attack" and "savage aggression" had hit residential areas and office buildings as well as military targets, filling the hospitals of Tripoli and Misurata with civilian victims. Zawi accused the foreign powers of acting to protect a rebel leadership which contains notorious terrorist elements. The Libyan government repeated its request for the UN to send international observers to report objectively on events in Libya.

The attacking forces are expected to deploy more cruise missiles, Predator drones, and bombers, seeking to destroy the Libyan air defense system as a prelude to the systematic decimation of Libyan ground units. International observers have noted that US intelligence about Libya may be substandard, and that many cruise missiles may indeed have struck non-military targets.

Libya had responded to the UN vote by declaring a cease-fire, but Obama and Cameron brushed that aside. On Saturday, France 24 and al-Jazeera of Qatar, international propaganda networks hyping the attacks, broadcast hysterical reports of Qaddafi's forces allegedly attacking the rebel stronghold of Benghazi. They showed a picture of a jet fighter being shot down and claimed this proved Qaddafi was defying the UN by keeping up his air strikes. It later turned out that the destroyed plane had belonged to the rebel air force. Such coverage provided justification for the bombing attacks starting a few hours later. The parallels to the Kuwait incubator babies hoax of 1990 were evident. Qaddafi loyalists said Saturday's fighting was caused by rebel assaults on government lines in the hopes of provoking an air attack, plus local residents defending themselves against the rebels.

At the UN vote, the Indian delegate correctly pointed out that the decision to start the war had been made on the basis of no reliable information whatsoever, since UN Secretary General Ban-ki Moon's envoy to Libya had never reported to the Security Council. The bombing started shortly after a glittering Paris summit "in support of the Libyan people," where Sarkozy, Cameron, Hillary Clinton, Stephen Harper of Canada and other imperialist politicians had strutted and postured.

Token contingents from Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia were

supposed to take part in the attack, but were nowhere to be seen, while some Arab states were expected to provide financial support. The minimum estimated cost of maintaining a no-fly zone over Libya for one year is estimated in the neighborhood of \$15 billion – enough to fund WIC high-protein meals for impoverished US mothers and infants for two years.

From no-fly zone to regime change

The alleged purpose of the bombing was to establish a no-fly zone and to protect a force of CIA-sponsored Libyan rebels composed of the Moslem Brotherhood, elements of the Libyan government and army subverted by the CIA (including such sinister figures as former Justice Minister Mustafa Abdel-Jalil and former Interior Minister Fattah Younis), and monarchist Senussi tribesmen holding the cities of Benghazi and Tobruk. But twin Friday ultimatums by President Obama and British premier Cameron, plus a speech by Harper, made clear that the goal was the ouster of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi and regime change in the North African oil-producing nation, whose proven reserves of crude are the largest on that continent.

Prospects for military success are uncertain, despite the apparent NATO preponderance. No clear military objective has been articulated, and disagreements about the scope of the war are likely. If Qaddafi's tanks and infantry are engaged in house to house battles with the rebels in cities like Benghazi and Tobruk, it will be hard for NATO to bring its air superiority to bear without massacring large numbers of civilians.

From hope and change to shock and awe

While Obama's action is being widely compared to the Bush-Cheney 2003 attack on Iraq, parallels to the April 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco are also strong. In that instance, a force of anti-Castro Cubans organized by the CIA was militarily defeated in an attempt to take over Cuba, resulting in calls from Allen Dulles to President Kennedy for air strikes and a ground invasion. Kennedy rejected those calls and fired the Dulles CIA leadership. Obama, faced by the military collapse of a CIA force in Libya, has ordered such bombing, opening a second phase of the present US debacle.

The rebel region of Cerenaica has long been the scene of Moslem brotherhood agitation against Qaddafi, much of it fomented from across the Egyptian border with US assistance. After the failed 1995 assassination attempt against the Libyan leader reported by MI-5 defector David Shayler (for which MI-6 paid £100,000 to an al Qaeda subsidiary), eastern Libya was the scene of a protracted Islamist insurrection. In the wake of events in Tunisia and Egypt, it has become clear that the CIA has stipulated a worldwide alliance against existing Arab governments with the reactionary and oligarchical Muslim brotherhood, which was created by British intelligence in Egypt in the late 1920s. Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), another CIA front, is trumpeting full support for the rebels on its website.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy was first to recognize the Benghazi rebels, calling for a no-fly zone and air strikes a week earlier, seconded by British Prime Minister Cameron. Until about 18 hours before the UN vote, top US officials like Secretary of State Clinton and Defense Secretary Gates were stressing the difficulties of a no-fly zone. French Foreign Minister Juppé lamented that it was already too late for a no-fly zone. Then, the US abruptly demanded a no-fly zone plus a blank check for aerial bombing. Diplomatic observers are puzzled by Obama's turnaround. Was he being blackmailed by the British and the French,

the same imperialist coalition that invaded Egypt to seize the Suez Canal back in 1956? Because of Obama's decision, the US is now at war with a fourth Moslem nation after Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. In Pakistan, the simmering conflict is threatening to escalate into the open at any time in the wake of the scandal around CIA contractor Ray Davis, accused by the Pakistanis as a terrorist controller.

The Arab League, surprising many analysts, had voted unanimously for a no-fly zone over Libya. The African Union, by contrast, has resolutely opposed foreign intervention. Western diplomats have discounted the AU position, giving rise to suspicions of racism. These are reinforced by reports that the anti-Qaddafi rebels have lynched a number of black Africans, claiming that they were mercenaries hired by Qaddafi.

Interference in Libyan internal affairs violates UN Charter

Diplomatic observers were shocked by the sweeping resolution passed by the Security Council, which allows "all necessary measures" to be used against Libya. The United Nations Charter strictly limits Chapter 7 military actions to threats to international peace and security, which Libya has never represented, but rules out interference in internal affairs of member states. The pretext cited in this case was the protection of defenseless civilians, but it is clear that the rebels constitute an armed military force in their own right. Since no state can be an aggressor on its own territory, the Security Council resolution stands in flagrant violation of the UN Charter. Russia, China, Brazil, Germany, and India abstained. The resolution contains an arms embargo against Libya which the US is already violating by arming the rebels through Egypt.

Among US officials demanding aggression, UN ambassador Susan Rice, Samantha Power of the National Security Council, and Secretary of State Clinton have shown that they are as bellicose as any neocon of the Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz school.

The Libyan Air Force has 13 airbases and some 374 combat capable aircraft, many of them obsolete. Military observers will be watching the performance of Qaddafi's air defenses, thought to be based largely on older Russian SAMs. But Qaddafi also has mobile and hand-held surface to air missiles. During a 1986 bombing raid on Tripoli aimed at killing Qaddafi, the US lost one F-111 to Libyan fire. The Libyan Defense Ministry has warned that Libya would retaliate against incursions by striking at air and maritime traffic over the central Mediterranean. In 1986, Libya fired two Scud missiles at the US Coast Guard station on the Italian island of Lampedusa, but both missed. Whether Qaddafi has used his immense oil revenues to procure more capable modern anti-ship missiles of Russian design is another question that may be answered soon. A further problem for the aggressors is the March 19 supermoon, which will illuminate the night sky for several days; the preferred time for air attacks is the dark of the new moon.

The propaganda choreography of the current aggression, designed to mask Obama's warmonger role, requires the right-wing leaders of Britain and France, the Suez 1956 partners, to take the lead. Obama has assumed a low profile, not attending then Paris conference, not making a formal Oval Office address to the American people, and letting the French attack first. Obama is visiting Brazil. This charade is supposed to placate the anti-US hatred of the Arab street. The result is that the inferior Anglo-French military equipment and command structures may contribute to unpleasant reverses for the aggressors, particularly if Sarkozy's Napoleonic delusions lead him to meddle in military decisions.

The Panavia Tornados to be deployed by London are obsolete; seven (6 UK, 1 Italian) were shot down by Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War twenty years ago. Eurofighter Typhoons are ultra-modern planes, but they have never been tested in real combat. The troubled French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle flies the Dassault Raffale, also largely untested in combat, plus the accident-plagued 30-year old Super-Étendard. Mirage F1s of various vintages, none recent, are expected. This equipment is vulnerable to attrition by Qaddafi's countermeasures.

Anglo-American propaganda portrays Qaddafi as a kleptocrat. In reality, Libya is one of the most advanced developing countries, ranking 53 on the UN Human Development Index, making it the most developed society in Africa. Libya ranks ahead of Russia (65), Ukraine (69), Brazil (73), Venezuela (75) and Tunisia (81). The rate of incarceration is 61st in the world, below that of the Czech Republic, and far below that of the United States (1). Longevity has increased by 20 years under Qaddafi's rule. Qaddafi, while suppressing political challenges, had shared the nation's oil income better than the rest of OPEC.

US bureaucratic resistance to the imperial overstretch involved in a war with Libya on top of the three existing conflicts may also have been overcome thanks to the activation of pro-British networks in the US government. If so, this would repeat a long-established pattern. In 1990, Margaret Thatcher claimed to have performed an emergency "backbone implant" on George H.W. Bush, convincing him to retake Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. In 1999, Tony Blair pressed for the bombing of Serbia and then for a ground invasion; Clinton wisely declined at least the latter. In September 2001, Blair helped convince Bush the younger to use the 9/11 attack as a pretext for an attack on Afghanistan.

The purpose of this attack, in the context of the CIA's spring 2011 campaign of putsches, palace coups, color revolutions, and people power insurrections, is to cripple the ability of US client states to seek alternative arrangements through alliances with Russia, China, Iran, and other states. The CIA onslaught takes the form of an attack on the nation state itself. In 2008, Serbia was partitioned. This year, Sudan is being carved in two, while Yemen is increasingly likely to face the same fate. The UN resolution of Libya mentions Benghazi specifically, indicating the clear intent of partitioning and balkanizing this nation along an east-west division. Other countries can expect similar treatment. It is time to end the destructive cycle of color revolutions before one of them turns into a civil war in a country like Belarus, where an internal clash could easily turn into a large-scale confrontation between Russia and NATO.

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