

Towards the Conquest of Africa: The Pentagon's AFRICOM and the War against Libya

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Global Research Editor's Note

The following is the English transcript of Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya's interview with Life Week, a major Chinese magazine based in Beijing.

Nazemroaya was interviewed by Xu Jingjing for Life Week's feature article about AFRICOM and Libya on April 1, 2011.

The 2008 article cited by Xu Jingjing is Nazemroaya's "The Mediterranean Union: Dividing the Middle East and North Africa."

XU JINGJING: According to your analysis, what is AFRICOM's role in the military intervention in Libya? What is its capability?

NAZEMROAYA: In reality, AFRICOM is still very much attached to EUCOM and dependent on EUCOM in many ways. It will be through this Libyan military intervention and the future military operations that will bud out of this war against Libya that AFRICOM will manage to further secure its independence from EUCOM. But I want to be clear. This does not mean that AFRICOM has no role in North Africa, because it has a role on the ground and I believe that it was actively involved in supporting the fighters now opposed to Colonel Qaddafi in Libya.

AFRICOM's role is currently latent or concealed. It is EUCOM, the U.S. military operational command that is based in Europe, which is currently running the operations against the Libyans. EUCOM also overlaps with NATO and both EUCOM and NATO have the same military commander, which is Admiral James Stavridis.

Several days ago, I listened to Admiral Stavridis speak to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee and he made it clear that Operation Odyssey Dawn is being led from Europe and that the U.S. military will always be in control of the military campaign against Libya. He also contradicted NATO's official spokesperson, by saying that there was a possibility that NATO troops could land in Libya for "stabilization operations."

Returning to AFRICOM's role, I said AFRICOM's role is currently latent or concealed. As the fighting in Libya proceeds, the role of AFRICOM will become clearer, more important, and

more visible.

AFRICOM has been involved in the intelligence work in regards to Libya. When Admiral Stravridis was asked by the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee about the role of Al-Qaeda in the Benghazi-based Transitional Council, he automatically answered that the commander of AFRICOM, General Carter Ham, could answer this question. This indicates that in the intelligence front and possibly rebel training it is AFRICOM that has been responsible and much more involved on the ground in Libya.

XU JINGJING: AFRICOM has no assigned troops and no headquarters in Africa itself. What is its major mission and objection? How do you evaluate its decision to enhance U.S. influence in Africa?

NAZEMROAYA: As I mentioned earlier, AFRICOM is still attached to EUCOM. Its capabilities in some senses are nominal. It will be via the military campaign against Libya and the years of instability that will haunt Africa after this war that AFRICOM will solidify itself as a separate operational military command.

AFRICOM's main objective is to secure the African continent for the U.S. and its allies. Its mission is to help secure a new colonial order in Africa that the U.S. and its allies are working to establish. In many ways this is what the military intervention in Libya is all about. The recent London Conference about Libya can even be compared to the Berlin Conference of 1884. The difference in 2011 is that the U.S. is at the table and more importantly leading the other participants in carving up Libya and Africa.

XU JINGJING: How is an African strategy important to the United States? How do you evaluate the influence of the U.S. in Africa now? What are the major barriers for the U.S. to expand its influence?

NAZEMROAYA: Of course the People's Republic of China and its allies play a major role in answering this question. The U.S. and its allies are not only formulating a new strategy to maintain and deepen their control over Africa, but are also working to push China and its allies out of Africa. The U.S. and many E.U. powers have watched China nervously throughout the years. China has been making major inroads in Africa and China is a major strategic and economic rival and challenge to the U.S. and Western Europe in Africa.

It will also be China and its allies that will form one of the barriers to the U.S. strategy to control Africa. The people of Africa cannot be forgotten either, because they will play a very important role to resisting the U.S. and the E.U. in the long-term.

Even as we speak there are protests in sub-Saharan Africa, which not too many people in the Northern Hemisphere even discuss or know about. In Senegal and other parts of West Africa there have been protests. In Central Africa there have been protests. While the protests in the Arab World are watched and intensely reported upon, the protests of these people are mostly ignored.

XU JINGJING: What were the changes of U.S. Africa policy in the past 20 years? What were the major motivations for those changes?

NAZEMROAYA: There are many ways to examine U.S. foreign policy in Africa in the past two decades. We can see a period of intense rivalry with the old colonial powers, such as

France, but what I think is important to note is that U.S. foreign policy in Africa has worked incrementally to push out China. Again, the motivations for this are the rise of China and its growing influence in Africa.

One cannot ignore China when speaking about Africa. All this has resulted in an actual dimension of cooperation between Washington and France and the old colonial powers. They are working together to secure the African continent within their collective sphere of influence and to muscle out China. At the end of the day, this is what AFRICOM was made for.

XU JINGJING: In one of your articles, you mention French plans on forming a Mediterranean Union. In your analysis, why is France always active in this region?

NAZEMROAYA: Paris has always been active in Africa, because of its proximity to the continent and its colonial history in Africa. It was the French that controlled the largest colonial empire in Africa. This is also why at one point France, with the support of Belgium and Germany, has been a major rival to the U.S. and Britain in Africa. This appears to have changed as Paris and its close partners have harmonized their interests with the U.S. and Britain.

I am glad you brought up the Mediterranean Union or the “Union of the Mediterranean” as it was renamed later as part of a public relations stunt. The article you mentioned was actually published by the North Africa Times several years ago, which I believe is Libyan owned. When the North Africa Times published the article, they removed the section where I quoted Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former national security advisor of the Carter Administration, about the longstanding plans to form a Mediterranean Union and what it involved.

The Mediterranean Union is a political, economic, and security entity. It is also complemented at the military level by NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue. The events leading to the formal declaration of the Mediterranean Union follow the same patterns that were used to expand the European Union and NATO in Eastern Europe.

The Union of the Mediterranean is meant to entrench the Mediterranean and the Arab World into the orbit of Washington and the European Union. It is also a bridgehead into Africa. The project calls for economic integration, massive privatization, and harmonization of policies. It is a colonial project and it serves to control and exploit the pools of labour in the Southern Mediterranean for the European Union. In the future, this can be used to upset the labour market in Asia and other regions. Also, it is through the Mediterranean Union that the immigration and refugee laws being used to manage the influx of people from North Africa were created. The E.U. was expecting these events and its members clearly spell this out when they made these laws.

XU JINGJING: What is your analysis on the U.S. and the military alliance’s actions in the first ten days of the war in Libya?

NAZEMROAYA: The actions in the first ten days of the war were never meant to protect civilians. The military operations have been offensive in nature and a means to weaken Libya as an independent state. I mentioned earlier that I listened to the testimony of Admiral Stavridis to the U.S. Armed Services Committee in Washington and I would like to refer to it again. At the hearing both Admiral Stavridis and Senator McCain both unwittingly stated that sanctions and no-fly zones do not accomplish anything. This is very profound. If these

actions do not accomplish anything, then why did the U.S. push for them to be imposed on the Libyans? The answer is that the operation is not of a humanitarian nature, it is an act of aggression meant to open the door into Libya and Africa for a new colonial project.

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