

Transition at the Pentagon: America's "Blizzard War"

From Robert Gates to Leon Panetta

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)
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On June 19, the war on Libya will be entering its third month. NATO has already announced that the war will continue until the end of September.

According to NATO sources, a total of 10439 sorties, including 3950 strike sorties, have been conducted since March 31st 2011. These figures do not include the sorties conducted from March 19-31, 2011.

A ground war is now on the Pentagon's drawing board with the deployment of helicopter attacks.

The Atlantic Alliance is visibly in crisis.

There are serious logistical shortcomings, failures in military planning as well as political divisions within NATO.

In a speech on June 11, the outgoing US Defense Secretary Robert Gates painted a grim picture of NATO's operations pointing to failures in both the war on Afghanistan as well as in the Libya campaign.

"Despite more than 2 million troops in uniform, not counting the U.S. military, NATO has struggled, at times desperately, to sustain a deployment of 25,000 to 45,000 troops, not just in boots on the ground, but in crucial support assets such as helicopters, transport aircraft, maintenance, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and much more." On Libya, Gates said, "The mightiest military alliance in history is only 11 weeks into an operation against a poorly armed regime in a sparsely populated country, yet many allies are beginning to run short of munitions, requiring the U.S., once more, to make up the difference." Gates added, "While every alliance member voted for the Libya mission, less than half have participated, and fewer than a third have been willing to participate in the strike mission. Frankly, many of those allies sitting on the sidelines do so not because they do not want to participate, but simply because they can't. The military capabilities simply aren't there."

Gates candidly acknowledged NATO's failure to implement "regime change" in Libya, pointing to shortcomings in the coordination between the Military and the intelligence apparatus:

"-Pilots flying the world's best fighter jets can't find targets because they don't

have the proper intelligence. "The most advanced fighter aircraft are of little use if allies do not have the means to identify, process and strike targets as part of an integrated campaign," he said.

-The NATO control center where the Libyan missions are planned is strapped and can barely handle the 150 sorties that aircraft are flying daily against Libya - only half the number of missions the center is designed to handle, Gates said. Even that required "a major augmentation of targeting specialists, mainly from the U.S., to do the job - a 'just in time' infusion of personnel that may not always be available in future contingencies," he added.

-The mission is running short of bombs and missiles and is having to turn to the United States for new supplies, even though Gadhafi's Libya is "a poorly armed regime in a sparsely populated country."

Despite the widespread NATO bombing, the conflict has remained stalemated for weeks, with Libyan rebels holding onto Misrata and the eastern half of the country, while Gadhafi controls the country's western portions and its most important oil export facilities.

Gates' downbeat assessment of the NATO campaign in Libya comes as a growing number of members of Congress are questioning both the legality and rationale for the U.S. involvement there. The Obama administration has called for Gadhafi to step down, but after leading the NATO mission for the first month, it has largely confined its role to providing munitions, intelligence and reconnaissance planes. (Miami Herald, June 12, 2011, emphasis added)

Gates paints in his outgoing message as Secretary of Defense an unusually bleak picture of the US-NATO alliance.

What is not mentioned in Gates speech (or in US military documents) is the unspoken role of the Resistance to military aggression in both Libya and Afghanistan.

Leon Panetta at the Helm of the Pentagon

Robert Gates, a former Director of the CIA is to be replaced by Leon Panetta, the current director of the CIA.

What lies ahead with Leon Panetta at the head of the Pentagon?

How will his appointment affect the evolution of military operations in North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. What are the underlying changes in US military doctrine.

Leon Panetta is a firm protagonist of "pre-emptive warfare", namely the conduct of outright wars of aggression using self-defense as a pretext and a justification.

Panetta is also the unspoken architect of the drone attacks in Pakistan, which have resulted in countless deaths of civilians under the banner of waging war on "Islamic terrorists".

New Pearl Harbor

Leon Panetta is committed to America's "long war"

According to Panetta, "the next Pearl Harbor could be a cyberattack" on America. Panetta's response is global warfare: "It's going to take both defensive measures as well as

aggressive measures”, said Panetta.

“The Blizzard War”

Leon Panetta is committed to an escalation of the “global war on terror” (GWOT), using Al Qaeda as a timely pretext to open up new war theaters.

The irony is that in Libya (as well as in Syria), the US and its allies are supporting an insurgency which is integrated by Al Qaeda.

Blizzard Warfare, according to Panetta consists in extending the war on terror into new frontiers always using the same pretext of an “outside enemy” who threatens America, namely Al Qaeda, an entity created and controlled by the CIA.

The objective is to implement the “long war”.

“To finish the job” refers tacitly to a war of conquest under the disguise of a humanitarian endeavor:

This is a time of historic change. Unlike the Cold War, when we had one main adversary, we face a multitude of challenges—al Qaeda and other global terrorist networks, places like Yemen, Somalia, North Africa, not just the FATA in Pakistan. Dangerous enemies spread out across the world.

We face insurgents and militants who cross borders to conduct attacks. We face the proliferation of dangerous weapons in the hands of terrorists, in the hands of rogue nations. We face cyber attackers, a whole new arena of warfare that can take place not only now, but in the future, and something we have to pay attention to. We face the challenge of rising and changing powers and nations in turmoil, particularly in the Middle East, undergoing enormous political transformation. ([Senate Armed Services Committee](#), June 9, 2011)

We are no longer in the Cold War. **This is more like the “blizzard war,” a blizzard of challenges that draw speed and intensity from terrorism, from rapidly developing technologies and the rising number of powers on the world stage.**

But despite the times we live in, there is reason to be confident. The operation that killed Osama bin Laden, in my view, has not only made clear to the world that we will do what we have to do, but it has also given us the greatest chance since September 11 to disrupt, dismantle, and to defeat al Qaeda.

But to do that, to be able to finish the job, we have got to keep our pressure up. If confirmed, my first task at DOD will be to ensure that we prevail in the conflicts that we are engaged in.

In Afghanistan, we must continue to degrade the Taliban. We have got to train security forces. We have got to help the government take ownership of their country so that they can govern and protect their country. ([Senate Armed Services Committee](#), June 9, 2011)

The Next Phase of America’s War

Panetta’s position regarding a US-NATO pre-emptive attack on Iran is explicit.

"I think in line with the President's statement that **we should keep all options on the table**, and that would obviously require appropriate planning. ([Senate Armed Services Committee](#), June 9, 2011)

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