

United States Bombs Compound in Northwest Libya, Over 40 Reported Killed

Two Serbian nationals dead while Belgrade sought to negotiate their release

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Global Research, February 24, 2016

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

Theme: [Terrorism](#)

In a bombing operation on Feb. 19 in Sabratha, Libya, said to have targeted an Islamic State training camp, over 40 people were killed by Pentagon F-15E fighter jets. The air strike was aimed at an IS operative who has been linked to an attack on the Bardo museum in neighboring Tunisia during 2015.

This airstrike hit the seaside area 50 miles west of Tripoli targeting Nouredine Chouchane, a Tunisian national. Chouchane has been accused of arranging the arrival of Islamic State operatives into Libya.

Chouchane, who is 35, was said by the Pentagon to have been killed in the bombing which leveled a residence with sixty other inhabitants claimed to be affiliated with IS. The attack follows similar airstrikes in June targeting Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar and in November aimed at Abu Nabil, also known as Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al Zubaydi, an Iraqi national who was the leader of the IS military structures in Iraq.

Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook in a briefing claimed "He (Chouchane) facilitated the movement of potential ISIL-affiliated foreign fighters from Tunisia to Libya and onward to other countries. Destruction of the camp and Chouchane's removal will eliminate an experienced facilitator and is expected to have an immediate impact on ISIL's ability to facilitate its activities in Libya, including recruiting new ISIL members, establishing bases in Libya, and potentially planning external attacks on U.S. interests in the region." (Associated Press, Feb. 19)

Diplomatic Fallout Surrounds Killing of Serbian Nationals

Nonetheless, media outlets are saying that two Serbian nationals held by the IS have been killed in the bombing. It has been reported for months that the Pentagon is drawing up coordinates for the bombing of Libya under the guise of targeting so-called "Islamic extremists."

IS has established bases in western Libya where they control the city of Sirte, the home of former Jamahiriya leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi who was brutally assassinated in the area on October 20, 2011. Libya had been subjected to a Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) engineered war of regime-change which resulted in thousands dead, millions displaced; leaving the once most prosperous state in Africa as a major source of poverty, underdevelopment, human trafficking and instability throughout the region.

The killing of the two Serbians has prompted protest from both the government in Belgrade

and among people across the country. Serbian officials had been negotiating for an end to the captivity of two of its citizens who were said to be diplomats.

According to Russia Today (RT) worldwide satellite television news network, “NATO’s promise of security and attempts to drag Serbia into the alliance are humiliating for the Balkan country at a time when two of its diplomats held hostage in Libya were killed in a pin-point US airstrike, Russia’s FM spokeswoman [Maria Zhakarova] said.... Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic said the death of two embassy workers was ‘terrible collateral damage’ and demanded explanations from Washington.” (Feb. 22)

In response to the attacks and recent pressure to sign a cooperation deal with NATO, Serbians participated in a wave of demonstrations on February 20. The agreement signed by the Serbian government guarantees diplomatic immunity and free movement by NATO military forces.

Thousands who demonstrated in the country were rejecting the accord as unconstitutional and against the popular will of the people.

The same article published by RT also noted “The US government should have known that two Serbian hostages were being held by IS affiliates in Libya, Zakharova said, as the Serbian government had shared their information with US intelligence agencies prior to the strikes. ‘The most tragic is that this information was given to the FBI and CIA. This is what the Serbian authorities asaid,’ Zakharova noted, adding that the US is now ‘denying’ knowledge of the hostages’ whereabouts.”

Bombing May be Precursor to Ground Invasion

This attack comes amid growing threats by German career diplomat and United Nations envoy Martin Kobler to mobilize a 6,000-person military occupation force that would intervene in Libya to impose a proposed unity regime between two rival factions vying for international recognition. The unity accord between the two rival regimes is designed to pave the way for a deployment of imperialist-led troops with the approval of the militia-backed juntas in both Tripoli and Tobruk.

The proposed UN peacekeeping force would be led by Italy and encompass troops from Britain, France and other allied states. Britain has already publically announced that it is planning to launch airstrikes inside Libya as well.

In a January 31 article published in the Daily Mail, it says “Britain is planning aerial bombings against Islamic State militants controlling parts of war-torn Libya, according to a military source.”

In more specific terms, the same report acknowledges “A team of six RAF officers and MI6 operatives flew to an airbase near the eastern Libyan city of Tobruk, which is under control by internationally recognized militia forces. Diplomats from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and US and French military personnel also took part to the gathering, the Sunday Times reports.”

Absent of the consolidation of the accord bringing together the two Libyan camps, the Pentagon will continue to launch air raids and special operations strikes against rebel leaders.

The Obama administration has come under criticism for its war against Libya in 2011 which has become a further stain on the White House seeking to facilitate the election of a Democratic president in November. Over the last seven years the foreign policy of the U.S. has continued its escalating military interventions and the building of bases in various areas throughout Africa.

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) troops number in the thousands in the Horn of Africa state of Djibouti spreading out its operations into Somalia and Ethiopia to along the Indian Ocean basin across Central and into West Africa and out into the Gulf of Guinea. Pentagon and CIA personnel work in close cooperation with other imperialist states seeking to dominate all of the continental governments through trade, diplomatic maneuvering, intelligence penetration and military “partnerships.”

Obama said on February 16 that “We will continue to take actions where we’ve got a clear operation and a clear target in mind. At the same time, we’re working diligently with the United Nations to try to get a government in place in Libya. And that’s been a problem.” (New York Times)

However, the interim regime in Libya designed to merge the competing factions based in Tobruk and Tripoli, denounced the bombing by the Pentagon saying the operation took place without the consultation and acknowledgement of either faction. There is a lack of unity and uniformity of action among the regimes raising doubts about the viability of this imposed dispensation.

A statement issued by the Libyan coalition of competing forces on February 19 “strongly condemns the airstrikes carried out by the US Air Force at certain positions in the town of Sabratha on Friday morning, February 19, 2016, without any coordination or consultation with the interim Libyan government. Any interference, similar to the one that has taken place, will be considered an open and flagrant violation of the sovereignty of the Libyan state and international law.” (RT.com)

Neighboring Tunisia, which was designated during 2015 as a significant non-NATO state by the Obama administration, has escalated its security operations aimed at keeping armed groups from entering the country from Libya. Although Tunisia is labelled as the only “democracy to emerge from the uprisings in the region during 2011,” the government in Tunis has maintained close ties with both the Pentagon and one of its principal allies in the Middle East, the monarchy of Saudi Arabia.

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