

Washington Escalates Renewed Bombing Campaign in Libya: US Intervention in Africa has Triggered An International Crisis

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Five years after the Pentagon and NATO destroyed the Libyan state under the leadership of Col. Muammar Gaddafi, the administration of President Barack Obama has once again launched a major offensive in its so-called "war on terrorism."

Department of Defense officials and the White House said that the aerial bombardments in the western coastal areas around Sirte, the home area of Gaddafi, would last for 30 days.

Ostensibly the U.S. is carrying out this military operation in order to both degrade the Islamic State which had moved into Sirte last year but to also fortify the Government of National Accord (GNA), which represents another effort to consolidate political forces within Libya that are favorable to imperialism and its allies in the region.

The GNA is the brainchild of Martin Kobler, a German career diplomat, who on behalf of the United Nations drafted a scheme to impose a neo-colonial regime in Libya in order to facilitate the deployment of a 6,000-person military force led by the former imperialist power of Italy and encompassing troops from the United States, Britain and France. All of these Western states participated in the overthrow of the Jamahiriya system under Gaddafi in 2011.

Regional Divisions in the East to the West Remains

Nonetheless, the GNA effort has failed to bring in key elements who dominated previous imperialist machinations in the North African state. The rival regime driven out of the capital of Tripoli now held-up in Tobruk in the east of the oil-rich nation, has never accepted the GNA concept.

On August 22, the rival group in Tobruk voted to reject participation in the GNA. The political gesture further complicates the situation inside the country.

According to Reuters press agency,

"The vote was the first since January, when the parliament rejected an initial list of ministers put forward by the GNA's leadership, or Presidential Council, which is meant to represent all sides of Libya's fractured politics. The Council arrived in the capital in March seeking to overcome divisions that have surfaced since the overthrow and killing of veteran ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. In 2014, an armed alliance took control of institutions in Tripoli and the then newly elected, internationally recognized parliament relocated to the

east.”

This same report continued noting

“Spokesman Abdallah Bilhaq said 101 deputies had attended Monday’s session, with 61 voting against the GNA, 39 abstaining, and just one voting in favor. The number of attendees was a little over half the chamber, but even the figure needed for a valid vote is the subject of dispute. A bloc of pro-GNA lawmakers that says it represents about 100 deputies accused the government’s opponents of hijacking the parliamentary process.”

A major outstanding issue in the dispute between the Tobruk-based faction and the GNA in the West of the country is the question of which military apparatus now in existence will constitute the national army. The leading eastern factions have endorsed the former General Khalifa Haftar, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) asset who spent nearly three decades in the U.S. after defecting from the Libyan government under Gaddafi. Haftar was flown from Virginia back to Libya during the 2011 counter-revolution to purportedly head the armed rebellion against the Jamahiriya.

Haftar and his forces have been fighting the Islamists along with other opponents in Benghazi and its surroundings in the East. The Tobruk regime, known as the House of Representatives, rightly point to the fact that the GNA is being propped-up by armed Islamist groups. The U.S. airstrikes are supposed to secure a victory over the IS in Sirte but the conclusion of this battle has been elusive.

“We reject this government because it is waging a war against the institution of the military, and it wants to support the role of militias on the Libyan stage,” said Abubakr al-Ghazali who opposed the GNA in the aftermath of the House of Representatives vote. The opposition to the GNA has extended to outspoken criticism of the bombing operation from divergent factions based in the East. These attacks launched by the U.S. against the Islamic State in Sirte have become the latest rationale for continued Pentagon involvement.

Interestingly enough longtime foes Sadek Al-Ghariani and Khalifa Haftar both have condemned the initial air campaign in early August on the so-called Islamic State in Sirte. Characterizing the Pentagon attacks as “illegal” during a press conference on August 4, Ahmed Mismari, the spokesman for Haftar’s Libyan National Army’s, asserted that the U.S. bombing operations had been carried out for electoral purposes to assist former Secretary of State and Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. Haftar’s spokesman said it would be his forces that would “liberate” Sirte.

In an article published in early August by the Libya Herald it says “For his part, Dar Al-Ifta head Sadek Al-Ghariani, who leads the hardline Islamist alliance against both Haftar in the East and the Presidency Council in the West, likewise called it illegitimate, coming his closest to endorsing the so-called Islamic State. Asked on his Tanasah TV station why international intervention was acceptable in 2011 but not in the fight against IS, he said that non-Muslim military help against Qaddafi in 2011 was legitimate because he was not a true Muslim and not following the Sunna (the Way) of the Prophet. However, raids now were illegal because what was happening in Libya was a conflict between local people who were all Muslims. This comes despite his previous backing for the Misratan-led Bunyan Marsous operation against IS and its welcoming of the American attacks.” (Aug. 4)

Whether Gaddafi and Jamahiriya system was Islamic or not seems to be an irrelevant question in light of imperialist bombings and military interventions. Under the Jamahiriya, Libya had secured a firm position as being the most prosperous state in Africa. The Gaddafi government played a progressive role in promoting the notions of a United States of Africa consisting of a single currency, a lifting of travel restrictions and a unitary military force.

Genuine Unity Must Be Based on National and Pan-African Interests

Such divisions within the Libyan society and body-politic can only further drain the capacity of the Libyan people to form a genuine government of national unity that would operate in line with the political objectives of African integration and self-reliance. The perils of U.S.-NATO military intervention has been rendered for all to see based upon the events since 2011.

Not only has Libya fell victim to the war of regime-change in 2011, other states such as Syria, Sudan, Yemen and Palestine, are undergoing similar crises. There have been 11 million people dislocated in and outside of Syria, and along with Libya, helps to fuel the outmigration from Africa across the Mediterranean and the Middle East to Europe. The migrant situation to Southern, Central and Eastern Europe from Africa, the Middle East and Asia has created a political impasse within the European Union (EU).

The Brexit vote in the United Kingdom (UK) on June 23 was in part a reflection of the unresolved issues stemming from the dislocation triggered through the wars waged by the Pentagon and NATO forces against the peoples of the oppressed nations. This EU fracturing is the result of the failure of an imperialist construct that grew directly out of the post-World War II domination of Western Europe by the U.S.

In the contemporary phase of capitalist development these large trading blocs and regional institutions dominated by imperialism cannot bring stability and prosperity to Europe let alone Africa and other regions throughout the world. Genuine unity must be centered upon the interests of the working class and oppressed who have the most to gain from cross-border alliances and mutual cooperation.

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