

US, NATO preparing new air and ground attacks against Libya

By Thomas Gaist
5 April 2016

The US and NATO are considering another round of military attacks against Libya, US President Barack Obama told media outside the White House on Monday.

Obama gave a convoluted statement to the effect that operations in Libya are in advanced stages of planning. “We are continuing to cooperate on an ongoing basis about operations potentially in areas like Libya where you have the beginnings of a government,” he said after meeting with NATO General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg at the White House.

“We can I think provide enormous help in helping to stabilize those countries,” Obama added. “This is obviously a tumultuous time in the world. Europe is a focal point of a lot of these stresses and strains in the global security system,” Obama said.

Obama’s talks with Stoltenberg centered on the possible US-NATO escalation in Libya and joint operations to contain the fallout from the refugee crisis in the eastern Mediterranean, according to Reuters.

Stoltenberg signaled that NATO forces are on high alert for possible missions against Libya. “NATO stands ready to provide support to the new government in Libya,” he said.

Also on Monday, media agencies reported that US military planners with Africa Command (AFRICOM) are drawing up detailed target lists for strikes in Libya, including targets in Ajdabiya, Sabratha and Derna.

The Pentagon is “seeking to improve coordination between US Special Operations forces and their French and British counterparts, which have established small cells on the ground, seeking in part to line up friendly militias,” the *Washington Post* reported.

The new governing coalition in Libya, formed last December and headed by Faez al-Sarraj, was created for the purpose of immediately requesting military

assistance from its imperialist patrons, a request that can be used to justify the indefinite continuation of the Western powers’ “robust UN mandate” authorizing air, sea and land attacks against Libya in the name of “international security.”

The US and European powers are preparing an intervention that will center on a drive to retake the capital of Tripoli and secure control over key oil infrastructure. Once the country’s vast oil wealth is safely in hand, Washington is prepared to accept the permanent partition of Libya into a patchwork of armed groups, with the US-backed coalition presiding over only the skeleton of a centralized state.

As the *Post* wrote Monday, “US officials envision a gradual absorption of militia forces into a new national army or at least a network of state-backed regional or tribal forces.”

Italy appears set to play a leading role, vowing to contribute half of the necessary resources and to lead a ground invasion of its former colony. The invasion is planned to include thousands of Italian troops, backed up by thousands more drawn from other NATO powers, for a total of as many as 6,000 ground forces.

As yet there are still no “concrete military commitments” to support the NATO-backed governing alliance, according to the *Post*.

Nonetheless, there are clear signs that the US military is committed to deeper US ground involvement in Libya as part of stepped up US special operations throughout Africa. Libya is only one of a handful of African hotspots where the US is preparing “unique special operations solutions,” US Army General Tony Thomas told Congress in March. Following a hypothetical seizure of Tripoli, US commandos will link up with militant forces already active in the area, recruiting them as allies of the fledgling unity

government, Thomas said.

Plans for new military strikes and a ground invasion come five years after the NATO war to oust the regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. As part of this operation, the US and European powers backed Islamic extremist forces, including Al Qaeda elements and precursors of Islamic State. The six-month NATO bombing campaign reduced entire cities to rubble.

The very Islamist militias whose actions now form the supposed justification for the US-NATO intervention emerged out of groups that were armed and financed as a means to overthrow Gaddafi and kickstart a new round of imperialist wars of conquest in Africa and the Middle East.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in March of 2011, as the war was getting underway, the “Libyan revolution” was, in reality, a cover for “the rape of Libya by a syndicate of imperialist powers determined to lay hold of its oil wealth and turn its territory into a neocolonial base of operations for further interventions throughout the Middle East and North Africa.”

Faced with a catastrophe created by their own actions, the imperialist powers are again placing Libya in the crosshairs, even as they expand operations in Iraq, Syria and throughout the Middle East.

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