Libya Conflict: Weekly Recap
By Michael Whittaker
October 6, 2011

Meet the New Boss

The National Transitional Council announced the Executive Board’s long-awaited cabinet appointments this week, though the Council did not make many changes to the ruling body. Mahmoud Jibril remained Prime Minister and assumed the position of Foreign Minister, previously held by Ali al-Issawi. However, Jibril promised to step down the moment NTC forces capture the loyalist holdout of Sirte. (AJE) Abdel-Rahman al-Keissah was appointed the Minister for Libyans Killed and Wounded, and Hamza Abu Fas replaced Sheik Salem al-Sheiki as the Minister of Religious Affairs. (AP) Jala Dghaili retained his post as the Minister of Defense, and Ali Tarhouni continued to head the Oil and Finance Ministry. The NTC leaders also announced they will start the process towards democratic elections once the city of Sirte has been liberated. (Reuters)

In Tripoli, Military Council chief Abdel Hakim Belhadj urged the city’s residents to turn over their weapons and encouraged the various rebel militias to return to their hometowns. Belhadj stated Tripoli’s “sense of safety is turning into terror” as independent armed groups continue to patrol the capital, and Belhadj’s deputy indicated, “whoever doesn't recognize the legitimacy of the (military) council doesn't recognize the legitimacy of the national council.” (Reuters) Belhadj also called for the full restoration of education and health services. (Al Arabiya) Tripoli’s schools opened two weeks ago, though administrators are still struggling to repair damaged facilities and establish a new curriculum in pro-Qaddafi areas of the city. (NYT)

Into the Breach

Rebel forces advanced into the Bouhadi district of Sirte, a residential area to the south of the city. The rebels captured the district on October 3, though nearly all of the residents from the pro-Qaddafi neighborhood had fled their homes. (Reuters) Heavy rocket and sniper fire from loyalist forces prevented the rebel fighters from seizing the city center, but rebel field commanders estimated their troops would defeat the loyalists within 48 hours. (Reuters, Reuters) Outside of Sirte, opposition forces captured the town of Qasr Abu Hadi on October 3. Located 12 miles south of Sirte, fighters from Misrata have vandalized and looted the town. (AFP) Opposition forces took the hills outside the loyalist stronghold of Bani Walid on October 6, though sustained sniper fire has slowed the rebel advance towards the town. (CNN)

The National Transitional Council continued its efforts to establish new security and stability institutions within Libya. NTC officials celebrated the induction of a new Libyan national army on October 4, as 500 recruits of the Souq al-Jumaa Brigade marched during a ceremony in Tripoli. (Reuters) The NTC Interior Minister also announced plans to create a new internal security service. The organization will replace the Qaddafi-era intelligence agency, though the only mission of the new service will be to track and arrest Qaddafi loyalists and fifth column followers. (Reuters) However, independent militia leader Abdullah Ahmed Naker announced the formation of the 22,000-strong Tripoli Revolutionist Council in the capital. Naker claimed the current Tripoli Military Council lacked the manpower to exert control over Libya’s largest city. (Reuters)
Problems with Petrol

British-based Heritage Oil reportedly purchased 51 percent of Sahara Oil Services Holding, a Benghazi firm, following a meeting between Heritage and NTC officials on October 4. (AFP) However, a senior official from Libya’s National Oil Corporation (NOC) denied the sale and indicated it was “too early” for Libya to sign any new oil arrangements. A Heritage spokesman insisted the deal was still valid, stating that the deal did not require the NOC’s approval. (Reuters) The NOC also announced it was seeking compensation for $6 billion of unpaid bills from international oil firms. A number of oil companies continued to operate in Libya during the conflict despite UN sanctions in March, though traders from two of the corporations indicated their companies would fully pay their debts. (Reuters) French oil company Total’s Libya JV called for the NOC to grant more independence to smaller companies and limit itself to regulatory responsibilities. (Reuters)

NTC Prime Minister Jibril stated overall oil production was resuming faster than anticipated, providing an estimated timeline of 12 to 18 months to reach pre-conflict production levels. (Reuters) The Zawiyah oil refinery, the second-largest in Libya, restarted operations on October 4 and the NOC Chairman predicted the rest of Libya’s refineries will be functional by the end of the year. (Bloomberg) Libya’s tanker fleet is also preparing to resume shipping duties. The head of Libya’s state-owned fleet announced that the first ships will be in service after two weeks, and the rest of the 24-vessel fleet will be sailing within a month’s time. (Reuters) However, Libyan engineers anticipated repairs alone will take 6 months at Waha Oil’s four oil fields, as the sites sustained severe damage from loyalist forces during the conflict. (Reuters)

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Endgame in Sirte

The Libyan rebels continued their advance into the city of Sirte this week, gaining significant ground against the loyalist defenders. Rebel fighters launched a renewed attack on October 3 from the city’s south, followed by a two-pronged assault from the east and west. (BBC) The assaults have reportedly pushed loyalist forces into two small pockets of resistance, though the remaining pro-Qaddafi defenders have stymied the rebel advance with heavy machine gun and rocket fire. (AP) Rebel field commanders are uncertain of how many loyalists still defend the city, and estimates have ranged from 400 to 2,000 pro-Qaddafi supporters. (Telegraph) Despite the continued loyalist resistance, National Transitional Council officials are confident that opposition forces will soon fully liberate the city. (CSM)

As the battle for Sirte continues, confusion surrounds the fate of Qaddafi’s son Mutassim Qaddafi. Rebel forces reportedly captured Mutassim on October 13 as he attempted to flee the city, and an NTC official indicated Mutassim was subsequently taken to Benghazi for questioning. (BBC) However, rebel commanders and other NTC officials have denied these claims. Rebel brigade commander Wesam Bin Hamid stated the capture reports were false, and NTC spokesman Jalal el-Gallal said, “There is absolutely no evidence that Mutassim is in custody in any of our battalions.” (Bloomberg) Rebel officials have previously issued erroneous claims of arresting Qaddafi’s sons; Saif al-Islam, Saadi and Mohammad Qaddafi were all allegedly captured during the fall of Tripoli, though each report proved false. (AFP) Muammar Qaddafi is supposedly in the “southern Libyan desert” with a small cadre of aides and bodyguards.
NTC Vice Chairman Abdul Hafiz Ghoga noted that the rebels were tracking Qaddafi by a satellite, but did not provide any additional details. (AJE)

Loyalists and Loose Ends

NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil stated his hope to declare Libya full liberated within a week, though loyalist forces still present a threat in several areas of the country. (AP) In addition to Sirte, pro-Qaddafi forces still control the town of Bani Walid. Rebel commanders reported launching a five-pronged assault on the town on October 10 and advancing to the outskirts of Bani Walid, though the loyalist defenders have prevented the opposition fighters from continuing into the town. (AJE) The security of Tripoli is also uncertain. Loyalist gunmen initiated a gun battle within the capital on October 14, with an estimated 20 to 100 pro-Qaddafi fighters engaging the opposition forces. Nine people were seriously injured in the clash, and NTC commanders have begun a follow-up operation to root out Qaddafi loyalists from the Abu Salim district. (BBC)

The NTC also confronted a number of governance challenges this week. Amnesty International released a report that detailed prisoner abuse in rebel-run detention facilities. The report indicates militias have detained over 2,500 people in Tripoli alone and that there have been cases with clear evidence of torture. (AP) NTC spokesman Jalal el-Gallal declared that Libya’s new government “will not tolerate abuse of prisoners” and will investigate the report’s allegations. (BBC) The NTC finance minister tacitly criticized Qatar for continuing unauthorized weapons shipments to Libya and called for international powers to seek NTC approval before sending additional arms. Abdel Hakim Belhadj, the Tripoli Military Council chief and alleged recipient of the Qatari weapons, denied receiving any military assistance from outside entities. (WSJ) Finance Minister Ali Tarhouni pledged to remove the chairman of the Waha Oil Company, Bashir Elshahab. Waha Oil’s workers went on strike to protest the leadership of Elshahab, who reportedly shared close ties with the Qaddfi regime. Libya’s National Oil Corporation confirmed Elshahab’s dismissal, and his removal follows the firing of the chairman of the Sirte Oil Company. (WSJ, Reuters)

Arms Control Agenda

The National Transitional Council and international partners continued to address the dangers of weapons proliferation within Libya. A Canadian delegation visited Tripoli on October 11 to assess the status of unsecured small arms and heavy weapons, and Canada and the United States have each pledged $10 million to assist in arms control efforts. (Toronto Sun) A US State Department spokesperson stated that nine arms control teams are currently active within Libya; each team is comprised of NTC members and assisted by one American official. (CNN) The State Department intends to expand the number of contractors on the ground to work with Libyans to secure lost missiles. (WP) Local leaders in Tripoli have begun the process of weapons registration, and charities in Benghazi are planning to establish cash-for-guns programs to reduce the presence of firearms. (McClatchy) The NTC has continued to implement official checkpoints and military zones to increase civil order, though officials have indicated that much work remains to be done. (France24)
Ends and Beginnings

Opposition forces pushed into Bani Walid and swept out pro-Qaddafi fighters on October 17. The rebels raised the new flag of Libya above several buildings in the city center. They reported that there were no signs of resistance and asserted that they had completely liberated the city. NY Times

Rebel fighters finally crushed the loyalist opposition in Sirte on October 20 after a week’s worth of fighting around the last two remaining pockets of resistance. Reuters Commanders on the ground declared that they had total control over the city after the morning’s 90-minute battle. They conducted several sweeping operations to search for any remaining loyalist fighters. Al Jazeera Heavy artillery fire during the almost two-month long siege has caused severe damage to the city, including public and residential areas. While the rebels insisted they took measures to protect civilians, some of their shelling appeared indiscriminate. BBC Residents returning to Sirte’s cleared areas accused rebel troops of looting and destroying homes. Since the final regime strongholds have fallen, the NTC can now declare liberation and begin the transitional timeline to write a constitution and hold elections. Reuters

Family Business

Interim Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril officially announced on October 20 that Muammar Qaddafi had died in the fighting around Sirte. French Defense Minister Gerard Longuet indicated that NATO warplanes fired a warning shot at a convoy of military vehicles outside of Sirte, stopping the vehicles. Rebels engaged the convoy and successfully detained Qaddafi, who was attempting to flee the city. Al Jazeera He died in their custody soon after. Jibril’s account of how Qaddafi died, however, differs from those of the rebels who detained him. It is unclear whether Qaddafi perished from wounds he sustained before his capture or after. WP The rebels have also killed or captured other members of Qaddafi’s family and high-level regime officials. Mutassim Qaddafi and the chief of Qaddafi’s armed forces, Abu Bakr Younus Jabr, reportedly died in the fighting. WP Witnesses later released footage of both of the bodies. The rebels also claimed to have detained Saif Qaddafi and regime spokesman Moussa Ibrahim. Al Jazeera

Helping Hands

The National Transitional Council hosted two high-profile visitors. British Foreign Secretary William Hague arrived in Tripoli on October 17 to announce the reopening of the British embassy. He indicated that his government would transport the final shipment of unfrozen Libyan banknotes in the UK. Hague also pledged de-mining support and experts to provide training on financial management. Both leaders urged rebel militias to place themselves under NTC control and supported the transitional government’s consolidation of power. BBC The second visitor, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, traveled to Tripoli on October 18 and met NTC chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil. She promised an additional aid package consisting of medical treatment for wounded Libyans in the U.S, English courses, and a preservation project for Cyrene’s ancient ruins. NY Times
Germany announced new contributions as well, promising to contribute €750,000 to locate and destroy small arms and anti-air rockets from regime weapons stockpiles. APO Germany, Ireland, the U.S., the UK, and Malta have all promised to assist with treating Libyan wounded and training medical personnel. AFP, Irish Times The State of Qatar signed a memorandum of understanding with the NTC to facilitate cooperation between the two countries’ public prosecution offices. QNA

Now that Qaddafi is dead and the final strongholds are liberated, NATO is closer to ending its air campaign over Libya. Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen hailed the success of the Libyan people and declared, “We will terminate our mission in coordination with the United Nations and the National Transitional Council. With the reported fall of Bani Walid and Sirte, that moment has now moved much closer.” AP

Industry Trials

Waha oil workers resumed their strike after the NTC overturned their deal with the National Oil Corporation to remove several of the company’s managers. The workers view the Waha managers as holdouts from the regime and accuse them of cooperating with Qaddafi. Reuters Other oil companies are in various stages of restarting production. The German company Wintershall announced it had reached one-fifth of its pre-conflict output levels. UPI The fuel company Repsol sent engineers to investigate damage at its El-Sharara oil field, but did not indicate a date to restart production. Reuters However, Austrian energy group OMV stated it was still too dangerous for it to investigate its Libyan facilities. Reuters

Libya Conflict: Weekly Recap
By Spencer Butts
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Let Freedom Ring

On Sunday, October 23, Mustafa Abdel Jalil spoke before a crowd in Benghazi and declared Libya’s liberation. (NY Times) He promised that the NTC would start the transitional timeline that the Council laid out in August. The timeline is a three-stage process to appoint a new government, write a constitution, and hold elections. Jalil declared, “We take the Islamic religion as the core of our new government. The constitution will be based on our Islamic religion.” Because of this, the new government will enact reforms to create a Sharia-compliant legal code. (WSJ) Jalil also stressed the importance of patience and reconciliation.

Because of the religious tone of Jalil’s speech, NTC officials reassured western powers over their commitment to democracy and human rights. Ali Suleiman Aujali, Libya’s Ambassador to the United States, insisted “Sharia law, Islamic law, it is not against democracy, it is not against equality, is not against the relations with the other countries based on interests and respect and cooperation.” Aujali stated that “moderate Islam” poses no risk and that there is no intent to restrict the role of women. (CNN)

Should We Stay or Should We Go Now

A day after Qaddafi’s death, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced the alliance’s preliminary decision to end operations in Libya by October 31. NATO’s spokeswoman, Oana Lungescu, stated that the organization does not intend to keep any armed forces in Libya after the operation’s conclusion.
The alliance planned to formally confirmation the date at a meeting on October 26. (BBC, Xinhua)

On October 25, however, Interim Oil and Finance Minister Ali Tarhouni stated he wanted NATO forces to remain engaged for another month. (Reuters) A day later, Jalil added his voice and requested that NATO continue its mission in Libya until the end of the year. Libya’s Deputy UN Ambassador Ibrahim Dabbashi told the Security Council that, while the Libyan people are eager to lift the no-fly zone, the transitional government had to evaluate the country’s security and ability to protect its borders. Dabbashi asked the Security Council to wait before terminating the mandate. Instead of holding the scheduled meeting, NATO postponed making a final decision until Friday to allow Rasmussen time to consult with the NTC and UN. (Al Jazeera)

The next day, on October 27, the UN Security Council unanimously passed a resolution to end its authorization for foreign intervention in Libya on October 31. However, the resolution did not lift the arms embargo or sanctions. (Reuters) NATO made their decision on October 28, confirming their initial decision to end operations by October 31. Some of the alliance warships may stay engaged to continue enforcing the arms embargo. (CSM)

**Loose Ends**

The Misratan rebels that transported Qaddafi’s body back to their city put it on display in a meat locker for four days, alongside those of his son Mutassim and army chief Abu Bakr Younis. (Reuters) Libya’s chief pathologist, Dr. Othman al-Zintani, conducted an autopsy on Qaddafi’s body and determined he died from a shot to the head, but did not release further details. (AP) Because of his report and international pressure, the NTC promised to look into the circumstances surrounding Qaddafi’s death. They established a formal commission to conduct an investigation. (NY Times) The NTC buried the three of them in a secret desert location after a modest Islamic ceremony at dawn on October 25. They did not release the location to prevent it from becoming a pilgrimage site and to keep people from defacing the graves. (Al Jazeera)

Saif al-Islam and Abdullah Senussi remained at large, still under warrants from the International Criminal Court (ICC). Initial reports placed Saif in the southern desert near Libya’s borders with Niger and Algeria, and an NTC official claimed he was trying to flee the country with a forged passport. (Reuters) On Friday, the ICC’s chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, stated they were holding indirect surrender negotiations with Saif, but did not know where he is. NTC sources claimed he was in a Tuareg-led convoy headed towards the Niger border. (BBC) Senussi reportedly left Libya successfully and fled into Niger’s northern desert region. A Niger official claimed he was in contact with Tuaregs leading Senussi’s convoy. (AP) A day later, Senussi had reportedly arrived in Mali, still under the protection of Tuaregs. The Malian government insisted that Senussi had not contacted them. (AP)

Qaddafi’s family expressed outrage over his killing and the display of his body. Saadi’s lawyer, Nick Kaufman, stated he was shocked by the “vicious brutality” the rebels showed his father. (Reuters) According to the family’s lawyer, Marcel Ceccaldi, they are planning to file a complaint with the International Criminal Court accusing NATO of war crimes. They believe that the airstrike led to his death. (LA Times)