

## Libya Conflict: Weekly Recap

By Anthony Bell

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### Negotiations between Qaddafi and Rebels

The regime revealed for the first time this week that it was engaging in direct talks with rebel officials in Rome, Cairo and Oslo. Libyan Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Kaim indicated a solution could be found by early August. ([Reuters](#)) At least publically, however, most regime officials have remained adamant that Qaddafi would not step down and his leadership position was not negotiable. ([Politico](#), [Reuters](#)) Qaddafi appeared to leave the possibility of negotiations open in a message released on Friday, while simultaneously threatening to bring the war to European soil and attack civilian targets. ([NYT](#))

There are signs of growing discord within the rebel leadership over the best solution to achieve Qaddafi's exit. The previously unequivocal rebel demand that Qaddafi must leave power and enter into exile appeared to have changed over the weekend. Mustapha Abdul-Jalil, chairman of the National Transitional Council (NTC), said that if Qaddafi stepped down, he could stay in Libya under international supervision, presumably retiring to his hometown of Sirte. ([NYT](#)) Abdel Hafiz Ghoga, vice-chairman of the NTC, later retracted the offer, suggesting Jalil had been offering his personal opinion and not the views of the NTC. Ghoga said that such offers had been proposed in the past but were now negated following an International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant for Qaddafi's arrest. Jalil's suggestion also spurred protests in the rebel capital of Benghazi, where public attitudes remain firmly against any deal with Qaddafi. ([BBC](#))

### Russia Pushes for a Deal

Russia has increased its efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict and arrange an exit strategy for Qaddafi. On Monday, Russian President Dmitri A. Medvedev met with NATO

Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and South African President Jacob Zuma—negotiating on behalf of the African Union—for talks on Libya. Russia has also dispatched its unofficial envoy Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, the president of the World Chess Federation, to Tripoli for a second round of talks with Qaddafi. ([NYT](#)) On Tuesday, the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* quoted a high-level Russian official as saying, "The Colonel [Qaddafi] is sending signals that he is prepared to relinquish power in exchange for security guarantees." ([Reuters](#)) The Russian report also said that one of Qaddafi's demands for leaving power was that his son and presumed successor before the rebellion, Saif al-Islam, be allowed to participate in elections, a condition that the rebels and the international community are unlikely to accept. ([CSM](#)) In a setback for the International Criminal Court case against the regime, the African Union on Saturday called on its 53 member states to disregard the arrest warrants issued for Qaddafi, saying they were complicating efforts to find an exit for the Libyan leader. ([AP](#))

## Rebels Stalled Along Western Front

Despite optimistic reports of rebel advances closing in on Tripoli, Qaddafi's forces remain dug-in around the city of Garyan at the foot of the Nafusa Mountains and in the coastal city of Zlitan to the northwest of Misrata. Both garrisons pose formidable hurdles to a major rebel advance on Tripoli from either direction. So far, many of the rebel victories in western Libya during June and early July have been relatively minor. On Wednesday, rebels captured the village of Qawalish in the Nafusa Mountains after a skirmish with loyalist soldiers, threatening to cut Tripoli's supply lines from regime strongholds in Fezzan, the southwestern region of Libya. ([NYT](#), [Post](#)) Yet the rebel forces remain disorganized, poorly armed and undisciplined. There are reports that after taking Qawalish, rebels looted homes and then retreated after loyalist artillery shelled the town. ([CNN](#)) Meanwhile, rebels from Misrata have made little progress pushing up the coastline towards Tripoli and have been sustaining heavy casualties from loyalist artillery outside of Zlitan. ([Reuters](#))

## Aiding the Rebels

In a growing sign of the international effort to arm the rebels, the Libyan government on Monday produced evidence that it had intercepted two rebel boats stocked with arms from Qatar off the coast near Janzour, a town located along the western coast between Tripoli

and Zawiyah. The regime displayed hundreds of captured Belgian-made FN assault rifles and crates of ammunition marked as originating from Qatar. The boats reportedly received their supplies from a Tunisian-flagged vessel in waters off the Libyan coast. ([Al-Jazeera](#)) Furthermore, rebel spokesmen in Misrata last week claimed to be in talks with France over providing the city's fighters with weapons and ammunition. ([CNN](#))

These reports come amid an international row last week after France admitted to airdropping weapons in early June to rebels fighting in the Nafusa Mountains. The French air drops have been highly controversial and were performed outside of NATO's operational command, possibly in violation of the UN arms embargo on Libya. Russia called France's actions a "flagrant violation" of the UN resolution, while China also voiced its strong displeasure. ([Al-Jazeera](#)) The French airdrops have made some allies uneasy that nations could begin taking additional unilateral military action without NATO's approval. This could further deepen the rifts within the alliance over the mission. ([Post](#))

Turkey extended diplomatic recognition and \$200 million in aid to the rebels on Sunday during a visit by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to Benghazi. ([Post](#)) The next day Turkey seized Libyan banking assets, taking temporary control of about \$862 million dollars. Turkey has slowly and reluctantly fallen in line with its NATO allies on the mission in Libya after staunchly opposing the military intervention in March. Turkey is not participating in Operation Unified Protector and has not entirely severed diplomatic ties with Qaddafi's regime. ([WSJ](#), [Reuters](#))