

Libya Conflict: Weekly Recap

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June 8, 2011

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NATO Air Campaign Intensifies

Tripoli has been targeted by NATO warplanes in an intensified aerial bombardment that began Monday and continued until early Wednesday morning. ([NYT](#)) These multiple daytime sorties, a departure from the irregular night-time bombing raids previously conducted, were described by NATO officials as “intensive and sustained” and “demonstrated increasing resolve to bring the Qaddafi regime's violence against the civilian population to an end”. ([NATO](#)) At least thirteen command and control facilities have been struck since Friday, including strikes on a “key Qaddafi regime intelligence headquarters building” and within Qaddafi’s Bab al-Aziziya compound. ([NATO](#), [Reuters](#), [AP](#))

NATO helicopters launched their first attacks in Libya on Saturday, striking a radar installation and at least one “armed checkpoint” near the eastern town of Brega. ([NYT](#), [NATO](#), [UK MoD](#)) The deployment of the helicopters—British Apaches launched from the *HMS Ocean* and French Tigres and Gazelles based on the *Tonnerre*—was first announced two weeks ago by the British and French governments. Helicopter attacks on loyalist vehicles and ground forces have been well-received by the opposition leadership. Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the chairman of the rebel’s National Transitional Council, stated that the rebels “welcome any measures to expedite the departure of Col. Gadhafi and his regime.” ([NYT](#))

International Political Outreach

China has increased its diplomatic involvement in the Libyan conflict, scheduling a meeting between the Qaddafi’s foreign minister, Abdelati al-Obeidi, and his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, in Beijing on Tuesday. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that “The two sides will exchange views on how to reach a political resolution to the Libya crisis.” This state visit comes shortly after a meeting in Qatar between rebel National Transitional Council leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil and the Chinese ambassador to Qatar. ([WSJ](#), [AFP](#)) China had remained largely uninvolved in the Libyan conflict up to now.

Russian envoy Mikhail Margelov met with Jalil on Tuesday in Benghazi in the first visit by a Russian official to Libya since the start of the conflict. Margelov reportedly offered to provide financial support to the opposition but tried to position Russia as a mediating party, stating that "Air strikes don't solve problems. We are in favor of a political solution, not a military escalation." ([Reuters](#)) Despite Russia's increased involvement in international diplomacy aimed at ending the conflict and removing Qaddafi from power, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated this week that Russia is "not seeking to take on the main role when it comes to mediation in Libya." ([AFP](#), [RFERL](#)) A visit by Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez to Benghazi on Wednesday rounded out the diplomatic engagement, as Jimenez recognized "the National Transitional Council is the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people." ([Reuters](#))

There is also increased attention on preparing for a transition of power if Qaddafi is deposed from power. British Foreign Secretary William Hague drew upon Iraq's "de-Baathification" as a precedent that the Transitional National Council should avoid if it assumes power. In a state visit to Washington, German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged to increase her country's commitment to the conflict after the end of hostilities. ([WSJ](#)) *The Washington Post* also reports that concern for Libya's stability and the prospects for civil war in a post-Qaddafi Libya extend to business leaders, both in the West and in Libya itself. ([Post](#))

Fighting on the Eastern and Western Fronts

Rebels have seized the towns of Bir Ayyad and Yafran this past week after more than three months of low intensity fighting in the western mountains. The towns are located roughly sixty miles southwest of Tripoli, though the mountainous territory will make any advance on the capital city very difficult. The recent victories were aided by a series of NATO airstrikes last Thursday that destroyed two tanks and two armored vehicles. ([Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#)) Fighting also erupted on the stalemated eastern front; a mortar attack on Ajdabiya by loyalist forces prompted a rebel attack into Brega. Two rebels were killed and one was injured by artillery in the subsequent engagement. ([AP](#))