

### Libya Conflict: Weekly Recap

By Anthony Bell

June 2, 2011

#### Pressure Increases for Qaddafi's Exit

South African President Jacob Zuma visited Tripoli on Monday where he met with Qaddafi to discuss a ceasefire deal brokered by the African Union. Zuma said that Qaddafi was willing to accept a deal that would halt all the fighting, including NATO airstrikes, and open a dialogue towards a negotiated settlement with the rebels. According to Zuma, Qaddafi stressed, "that he was not prepared to leave his country, despite the difficulties." NATO and the rebels have made Qaddafi's departure a precondition for a ceasefire, and they quickly rejected the proposal as inadequate. The latest proposal marks the second trip by the South African leader to Tripoli in recent weeks to negotiate a ceasefire. Zuma and the African Union, seen as sympathetic to Qaddafi who lavished financial aid on African countries, have previously accused NATO of overstepping its U.N. mandate and undermining its peacemaking efforts. ( [NYT](#), [LAT](#), [WAPQ](#), [AJ](#) )

In a diplomatic twist, Russia announced on Friday that it would act as a mediator between NATO and Qaddafi and pressure the Libyan leader into leaving power. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said Qaddafi's regime had lost legitimacy and he must leave power, aligning Russia's position on Qaddafi's future with NATO and the rebels. Medvedev indicated that Russia would leverage its relationship with Qaddafi to convince him to leave power and go into exile. While Russia has said it will not offer Qaddafi asylum, it would assist in finding a country to take him in. If Qaddafi refuses to leave, Russia has hinted it would not block further action against Libya by the United States, Britain and France in the Security Council. The significant pivot in Russia's position, which had been increasingly critical of NATO's air campaign, came after a meeting between Obama and Medvedev at the G8 summit in France. ( [NYT](#), [WSJ](#), [Reuters](#), [AP](#) )

#### NATO Extends Mission and Resumes Airstrikes

NATO extended its mission in Libya for at least 90 days on Wednesday and the alliance resumed airstrikes in Tripoli after a three day bombing lull in the capital for South African President Jacob Zuma's meeting with Qaddafi. ( [NYT](#), [Reuters](#) ) Video has emerged of Western special operations forces and intelligence officers, possibly members of the British SAS and MI6, operating on the ground alongside rebels in Dafniya, just east of Misrata. ( [Telegraph](#), [BBC](#) ) Allied officials and commanders said that British and French attack helicopters would be put into action in Libya as soon as they were ready despite the risk they face from ground fire. ( [Reuters](#) ) Britain announced that it was preparing to drop 2,000-pound bunker-buster bombs on Qaddafi's fortified compound in Tripoli. ( [LAT](#) )

British Defense Secretary Liam Fox sent warning to members of Qaddafi's inner-circle, saying that the Libyan leader will be forced from power sooner or later and, "the calculation for those around him is how long they continue to invest in someone who will ultimately be a loser." ( [LAT](#) ) NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen declared allied operations were succeeding and that Qaddafi's "reign of terror" was nearing an end. U.S. Admiral Samuel Locklear, commander of NATO's Joint Operations Command, said Tuesday that the alliance may need to deploy a small number of ground forces to help stabilize Libya after Qaddafi's regime folds in order to avoid a power vacuum. ( [Reuters](#) )

### Rebel Council Reforms its Fledgling Military

Rebel fighters held up in the Western Mountains south of Tripoli are reportedly smuggling weapons from Qatar and Benghazi into western Libya from Tunisia to resupply their fighters. ([Reuters](#)) The National Transitional Council (NTC) announced that it was officially naming its armed forces the 'National Liberation Army' (NLA). The rebel administration hopes that the new name, "will better define the increasingly professional and disciplined military efforts to overcome the Qaddafi regime." ([AFP](#)) Finally, in the wake of reports that rebel fighters have engaged in extra-judicial executions of loyalist prisoners and former security officials in eastern Libya, the NTC has begun handing out guidelines regarding the treatment of prisoners of war and detainees to its fighters. ([WAPQ](#))

Rebel leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil said on Saturday that the members of the NTC would not seek office in elections after Qaddafi was removed from power. Jalil said he expected elections to take place within a year, after a constitution was drafted. ([Reuters](#)) The rebel oil minister Ali Tarhouni recently said that it could be weeks before oil fields in rebel-held eastern Libya begin production again due to the lingering security threat posed by loyalist forces. The rebels control the small aging refinery at Tobruk, near the Egyptian border, which shutdown last week after its stores of crude oil ran dry. ([FT](#), [Reuters](#)) Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini opened the Italian consulate in Benghazi on Monday and announced that Italy would provide the NTC with hundreds of millions of Euros in financial and fuel assistance. The Italian aid would be guaranteed by the billions of dollars in Libyan assets that Italy has frozen under U.N. sanctions. ([WSJ](#), [Reuters](#))

### Qaddafi Troubled By Defections and Capital Protests

Eight former Libyan military officers announced in Rome on Monday that they were among a group of 120 military officials that had recently defected from Qaddafi's regime. The eight officers at the press conference, which was organized by the Italian Foreign Ministry, said they and others had escaped Libya through Tunisia. ([LAT](#), [Reuters](#))

In a sign of increasing defiance to the regime in Tripoli, small protests occurred in the capital over the weekend after several months of silence following the bloody crackdown by Qaddafi's security forces in late February. Protesters were dispersed by security forces that fired over the crowd. ([WAPQ](#), [Reuters](#))

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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](#) )

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June 16, 2011

### Ongoing Diplomacy

Colonel Moammar Qaddafi remains defiant in the face of a concerted international diplomatic effort to convince him to step down from power. A spokesman for the regime said that a Russian envoy who had planned to meet with Qaddafi was “not welcome” in light of Russia’s decision last month to push for Qaddafi’s removal. ([NYT](#)) Despite the Libyan leader’s refusal to leave power, several countries have voiced a willingness to host Qaddafi if he agrees to leave the country. This list is said to include South Africa, Senegal, Uganda, and Turkey. ([Bloomberg](#), [Reuters](#), [AP](#)) Senegal and Mauritania have been among the few African countries that have publicly called for Qaddafi’s removal.

The National Transitional Council (NTC), the Libyan opposition’s governing body, received the largest pledge yet from international donors after a meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on June 9<sup>th</sup>. The ICG pledged more than \$1.3 billion to the NTC, of which \$1.2 billion is to come from Italy and France. The balance of the total pledge will be made up by Kuwait, Qatar, and Turkey. ([Al Jazeera](#)) The NTC also made progress this week in achieving broader diplomatic acceptance; the United Arab Emirates fully recognized the NTC while Germany and Canada both described the NTC as the legitimate representative of Libya, but stopped short of full diplomatic recognition. ([Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [AFP](#)) The United States has also withheld full diplomatic recognition, referring to the NTC instead as the “legitimate interlocutor” of the Libyan people.

### Renewed Combat

Fighting in western Libya continues in several isolated pockets around the capital city of Tripoli. East of Tripoli, loyalist soldiers resumed artillery and rocket bombardments of the port city of Misrata late last week despite having been pushed back by a rebel offensive earlier this month. ([Reuters Canada](#), [Reuters](#)) There were also reports of an armed uprising thirty miles west of Misrata in the town of Zlitan, located roughly eighty-five miles east of Tripoli. ([Post](#)) These clashes are significant, as rebel fighters in Misrata have resisted pushing into Zlitan until a local uprising developed, for fear of being seen by residents as aggressors. The rebels must take Zlitan before marching on Tripoli, though on Wednesday NATO commanders told the rebels to stay outside the town in advance of airstrikes on loyalist forces in Zlitan. ([Post](#), [BBC](#)) To the southwest, opposition forces in the western Nafusa Mountains consolidated their gains after ending a lengthy siege in the mountain town of Yafran on June 6<sup>th</sup>; Qaddafi’s troops retreated from the nearby towns of Al-Rayyana and Kikla on Monday and Tuesday, respectively. ([Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#)) These gains should not be overstated, however, as the rebels were predominantly ensconced in the high ground while Qaddafi’s forces fired artillery and rockets from a low-lying road. Further west of capital city, loyalist forces moved into Zawiya when fighting erupted in the coastal town on Saturday. ([Reuters](#)) Zawiya straddles the coastal highway and is the largest city between Tripoli and the Tunisian border; rebel control of Zawiya would be disastrous for the regime, as the flow of supplies from Tunisia to Tripoli would be cut off.

Fighting broke out Monday in the eastern battleground of Brega, which experienced intensive combat earlier in the conflict. In the eastern oil town, more than twenty rebel fighters were killed after Qaddafi’s forces repelled an apparent offensive by opposition forces. ([LAT](#), [AFP](#)) This is the most serious combat along the eastern battlefield after the rebels retreated into the nearby town of Ajdabiya in early April.

### NATO's Internal Disagreement

Divisions within NATO surfaced this week over the scope of Operation Enduring Protector. An unnamed NATO official told CNN that U.N. Resolution 1973 "justifies the targeting of Libyan leader Moammar Qaddafi," a perspective seemingly demonstrated by the sustained bombing campaign early last week in Tripoli. South African President Jacob Zuma made a statement castigating NATO for pursuing this line of effort, criticizing the western alliance for using the resolution for purposes of "regime change, political assassinations and foreign military occupation." ([Reuters](#)) However, a NATO spokeswoman disagreed with this interpretation, stating that NATO is "simply not targeting individuals." ([CNN](#))

Disagreement over the long-term viability of operations in Libya has increased in the wake of a speech by outgoing U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, where he bluntly chastised some NATO member states for not possessing the capabilities or political will to prosecute the conflict. Gates stated that some member states are running out of weapons, a claim disputed by NATO officials. ([LA Times](#), [RFERL](#)) The stress of ongoing operations on NATO members was validated by the chief of the UK's Royal Navy, Admiral Mark Stanhope, who warned that the British fleet will have to "reprioritize forces" if the conflict extends beyond September. ([Post](#)) However, the head of the UK's armed forces, General Sir David Richards, disputed this, stating that "We can sustain this operation as long as we choose to." ([BBC](#))

### The Home Front

Congressional criticism of President Barack Obama increased this week amid growing frustration that Congress has not been approached to approve U.S. involvement in Libya, pursuant to the War Powers Act. Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner sent a letter to President Obama on Tuesday warning that the President will be in violation of the War Powers Act if he does secure Congressional approval by June 17<sup>th</sup>. ([WSJ](#)) This ultimatum comes on the heels of an amendment passed by the U.S. House of Representatives to a military appropriations bill that stated that "none of the funds made available by this act may be used in contravention of the War Powers Act." ([Post](#), [Al Jazeera](#)) This amendment, introduced by Democratic representative Brad Sherman from California, is seen as a criticism of President Barack Obama. The bill still must be voted on in its totality by both the House and Senate before taking effect.

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June 23, 2011

### Unintended Casualties

NATO warplanes executed two separate airstrikes this week that left more than twenty civilians dead in and around the capital city of Tripoli. Nine people, including several children, were killed Sunday when a missile struck an apartment building in Tripoli's populous Souk Juma district. ([Post](#)) NATO officials initially acknowledged responsibility for the strike, releasing a statement admitting that "there may have been a weapons system failure which may have caused a number of civilian casualties." However, on Wednesday the New York Times reported that the explosion may have been caused by a Libyan SA-6 surface-to-air missile launched from the site NATO jets were bombing.

( [NYT](#)) The neighborhood, a residential area containing a secondary school, is reported to be one of the few areas of the capital city that openly protested the Qaddafi regime during the beginning stages of the conflict in late February. ( [LAT](#)) Regime officials were quick to use the bombing for propaganda purposes, busing international journalists to the scene and characterizing civilian casualties from NATO airstrikes as having shifted from "collateral damage" to "direct hits." ( [LAT](#))

The following morning, NATO airstrikes destroyed a luxury compound outside of Tripoli owned by Khoweldi Hamedi, a high-ranking regime official who had been part of the 1969 coup that brought Qaddafi to power. ( [AFP](#)) Hamedi himself survived the strike, though fifteen people believed to be family members – several of whom were children – were killed. NATO officials described Monday's airstrike, which occurred forty miles west of Tripoli in the town of Surman, as "a precision strike on a legitimate military target," but also expressed regret for "any loss of civilian life." ( [LAT](#)) Hamedi is reported to be a Major-General in the regime who led a brutal crackdown in the western town of Zawiya in late February. ( [AP](#)) Close ties to Qaddafi extend to Hamedi's family; one of his daughter's is reportedly married to Qaddafi's son Saadi.

Finally, there were also isolated reports that NATO jets mistakenly bombed a rebel convoy near Brega in eastern Libya this past Thursday. ( [Al Jazeera](#), [LAT](#)) NATO spokesmen released a statement expressing regret for the loss of life, but did not release any details regarding casualties. This would be the fourth incident of friendly fire during the conflict.

### Dissent within the Ranks

The international coalition supporting the NATO air campaign showed signs of internal divisions this week after European leaders argued over the best way forward. On Sunday, the head of an influential Italian political party called for the end of Italian involvement in Libya. ( [WSJ](#)) The comments by Umberto Bossi, the leader of the Northern League and an important political ally of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, were followed by a speech on Wednesday by Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, who called for "an immediate humanitarian suspension of hostilities" to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid. ( [Post](#), [BBC](#)) In response, the French government – whose participation in the NATO mission far outstrips that of Italy – issued a statement resisting such a pause, claiming that halting military operations "would allow [Libyan leader] Muammar Gaddafi to gain time and reorganize." ( [BBC](#)) However, opposition to the military operations extends beyond Europe, as the head of the Arab League also urged for a ceasefire in order to negotiate a political solution to the conflict. ( [Guardian](#))

Uncertainty about the viability of the bombing campaign has even reached the United Kingdom, where a public disagreement has emerged between Prime Minister David Cameron and some top military officials. During the last week, both the second-in-command of the Royal Air Force and the head of the Royal Navy have publicly expressed concern that sustained military operations in Libya are putting a strain on the British military. ( [BBC](#), [Guardian](#)) Cameron chastised the military leaders in a Tuesday press conference, stating that "There are times when I wake up and read the newspapers and think, 'I tell you what, you do the fighting and I'll do the talking.'" ( [NYT](#))

### Political Turmoil at Home

Congressional disagreement over U.S. involvement in the Libyan conflict has grown this week as the White House has resisted invoking the War Powers Act and obtaining Congressional authorization for ongoing operations.

Both houses of Congress introduced resolutions approving of the continuation of the current mission for another year. ([LAT](#)) Though the bill in the Senate – introduced by Senator John McCain and Senator John Kerry – could be passed, House Republicans have indicated that they would vote down such a resolution. The Republican leadership in the House of Representatives introduced a second measure that authorizes a more restricted mission: it would prohibit “the use of money for military activities other than search and rescue; aerial refueling; operational planning; and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance — essentially requiring an end to direct American combat activity like missile strikes.” ([NYT](#), [Reuters](#))

Debate over U.S. involvement escalated after Republican leaders were unconvinced by the legal justification for ignoring the War Powers Act contained in a White House report. ([Post](#)) The Obama administration has sought to portray U.S. forces as uninvolved in hostilities, a description somewhat undermined by reports that U.S. jets have attacked Libyan air defenses about 60 times in addition to roughly 30 strikes by drones on Libyan forces. ([NYT](#))

### **New Drone Crashes**

The wreckage of an unmanned helicopter drone was found in Libya on Tuesday. Libyan state news agencies claimed that it had been shot down by Libyan armed forces near Zliten, about 160 km east of Tripoli. ([Al Jazeera](#)) NATO confirmed that the drone had gone down along the coastline in central Libya, but did not discuss the circumstances of the crash. The drone, a U.S. Navy MQ-8 Fire Scout, was one of two aboard the USS Halyburton frigate and is reported to be used for surveillance and targeting acquisition only. ([Aviation Week](#))

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**June 30, 2011**

### **Rebels Make Small Gains in the West**

While fighting has remained largely stalemated across Libya, the rebels fighting in the Nafusa Mountains south of Tripoli have been pushing closer to the capital and made several small gains in the past week. ([NYT](#)) Rebel and loyalist forces have been heavily engaged at town of Bir al-Ghanam which is only fifty miles southwest of Tripoli, marking the closest rebel positions to the capital. The rebels have continued to meet heavy resistance from loyalist forces who have dug in at several strategic crossroads towns outside of Tripoli. On Tuesday, the rebels captured a large military base about 15 miles south of Zintan, but only after the loyalist troops fled to a nearby base following a brief skirmish. ([LAT](#)) Upon capturing the base, the rebels displayed their continued lack of discipline, organization and training. Hundreds of rebels descended on the base in a frenzy to loot its bunkers of weapons and ammunition. The rebel success was short-lived and ended in a panicked retreat after rumors spread that loyalist troops were returning. ([NYT](#))

It was revealed on Wednesday that France airdropped a large amount of weapons, ammunition and other supplies to rebels in the Nafusa Mountains several times in early June. Previously Qatar was the only country known to be directly providing weaponry to the rebels.

A French military spokesman defended the move, saying the weapons—which included rocket launchers, assault rifles, machine guns and anti-tank missiles—were provided to civilians to allow them to defend themselves from the regime. The airdrops appear to explain the recent rebels gains in the Nafusa Mountains, but notably, the French airdrops were conducted without consulting other NATO members. NATO has previously been divided over sending weapons to the rebels as several member have objected saying it would violate the alliance’s U.N. mandate. ( [Reuters](#), [Post](#) )

## Arrest Warrants Issued for Qaddafi

On Monday, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Muammar Qaddafi, his son Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, and his intelligence chief and brother-in-law Abdullah al-Sanusi. The three face charges of crimes against humanity for their involvement in the murder and persecution of hundreds of civilians during the initial phases of the Libyan uprising in late February. ( [LAT](#) ) The Libyan government rejected the ICC’s legitimacy and accused it of bias against African leaders and pursuing a hidden agenda for the West. ( [NYT](#) ) The warrants have sparked a heated debate among government officials, military officers and legal scholars as to whether the prosecution of Qaddafi and his cohorts during the height of the conflict could impede diplomatic efforts to get them to leave power and enter into exile. Defenders of the court have maintained that the warrants send a powerful message to other dictators and will cause splits in Qaddafi’s inner-circle as senior officials realize they will be held accountable for their actions. ( [Post](#), [LAT](#) )