

Libya: Fourth Target Of Western Military Attacks In 12 Years

Russia warns of "full-scale military action" following Security Council vote on Libya

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Global Research, March 19, 2011

[Russia Today](#) 19 March 2011

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

"We must not forget how NATO and US aircraft bombed Yugoslavia, and that is not the only precedent. Libya may become the fourth country in 12 years to be threatened with direct military foreign interference after Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq."

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Following a decision by the UN Security Council to take "all necessary measures" against Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, Russian politicians and experts are warning of further destabilization in the region.

The UN Security Council voted on Thursday to impose a no-fly zone, which includes the possible use of military force, against pro-Gaddafi forces.

Presently, the Libyan strongman's military is successfully beating back a large anti-government uprising, and is in the process of consolidating his forces around Benghazi, a city to the north where the "interim Libyan government" is penned in.

Diplomats said the resolution, which was written in the eleventh hour of the Libyan conflict, allows for a wide range of actions, including strikes on air-defense systems and missile attacks from ships.

Indeed, full-blown military activity could commence "within hours," they said.

Russia and four other council members - China, Germany, Brazil and India - abstained from the vote.

Will outside interference aggravate situation?

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Russian Liberal Democratic Party leader and State Duma vice speaker says the Security Council resolution does not bode well for the prospects of peace in the region.

“The consequences will be extremely negative,” the LDPR leader said at a press conference at Interfax on Friday, adding that the resolution is “a symptom of preparations for a full-scale military operation.”

The outspoken Russian politician, who is known for his loaded language, drew parallels between yesterday’s Security Council vote and past military actions undertaken on the part of NATO and the United States military.

“We must not forget how NATO and US aircraft bombed Yugoslavia, and that is not the only precedent,” Zhirinovskiy warned. “Libya may become the fourth country in 12 years to be threatened with direct military foreign interference after Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq.”

He said the international community should understand the danger of such interference “on the pretext of protecting peaceful Libyans.”

Meanwhile, Russia’s Ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, said the blame for “humanitarian consequences” following any military action will be on the shoulders of those involved in such operations.

“Responsibility for inevitable humanitarian consequences caused by excessive use of outside force in the Libyan situation would be fully born by those who resorted to such actions,” Churkin told reporters following the Security Council vote.

The Russian ambassador warned that some provisions of the resolution may result in a large-scale use of force.

“They potentially open the door for a large-scale military intervention,” Churkin said. “During our discussion, assurances were voiced about the absence of such intentions. We take them into account.”

The ambassador added that no explanations were provided as to how the no-fly zone would be enforced and “what will be the rules and limits of the use of force.”

Asserting that Russia did not veto the resolution as it was “guided by the necessity to protect civilians and by general humanitarian values,” he remained convinced that “an immediate ceasefire is the shortest way to reliable security of the peaceful population and long-term stabilization in Libya.”

With no details as to how the Security Council will organize a military response against Gaddafi, military experts are waiting to hear from NATO, which is convening a meeting in Brussels on Friday to discuss the issue.

A diplomatic source in the Russian mission to NATO told Interfax that the meeting is the first such meeting since the adoption of the resolution and “it is better to refrain from making any predictions. “

Meanwhile, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Nikolai Makarov has ruled out the possibility of Russia’s involvement in a military operation against Libya.

“No, that is out of the question,” he told Interfax on Friday.

A “lesson” for would-be proliferators of WMD?

Finally, military involvement on the part of international forces may play into the hands of violators of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction regime, Alexei Arbatov, the head of the International Security Center of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, said in an interview with Interfax.

“An attack against Libya would be a gift for all violators of the Non-Proliferation Treaty,” Arbatov said. “If Libya becomes an object of a military operation, it will lead some countries to believe that no one would think of threatening Gadhafi with a military operation now if he had not voluntarily given up his nuclear program several years ago.”

“The imposition of a no-fly zone is a military operation,” he said. “It envisions attacks on aerodromes and air defense systems, not just a ban of flying.”

Arbatov predicted that any military action taken against Libya will be watched carefully by certain states that are now borderline pariah states, at least as far as the United States, and some other governments, is concerned

“This will lead Iran, Syria, and some other countries violating the non-proliferation regime to make a new powerful step towards obtaining nuclear weapons,” the expert said.

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi officially halted the development of weapons of mass destruction programs in December 2003, a move that temporarily restored his reputation in the eyes of the global community.

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