

Libya: NATO Transitions To Terror Bombing Phase Of War

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On the evening of April 30 a Libyan government spokesman announced that an air strike by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had hit a target in Tripoli, killing leader Muammar Gaddafi's 29-year-old son Saif al-Arab, three of the former's grandchildren, all under twelve years of age, and several friends and neighbors.

The attack followed by only a few hours a television address by Gaddafi in which he appealed to NATO nations for a ceasefire and negotiations after six weeks of bombings and cruise missile attacks against his country.

His comments included the questions: "Why are you attacking us? Why are you killing our children? Why are you destroying our infrastructure?"

As he spoke, NATO warplanes struck government buildings near the broadcasting facility where he was speaking, with the transmission going out on three occasions. The government accused NATO of attempting to kill Gaddafi in the attack.

It was the latest in a steadily mounting series of air attacks on and near the Libyan capital, including a bombardment on April 20 that killed seven civilians and wounded 18 in a suburb of Tripoli and an air raid that targeted Gaddafi's compound among strikes on several military and civilian locations two days later, killing three people and destroying the leader's office in his Tripoli residence. A Libyan official informed journalists of what was self-evident: "It was an attempt to assassinate Colonel Gaddafi."

Three days afterward NATO aircraft launched yet another attack against Gaddafi's Bab al-Azizia compound in the capital shortly after midnight, the third such strike on the site. In the April 25th bombing 45 people were reported wounded, 15 seriously, and others were unaccounted for.

The intensification of strikes in Tripoli led to Russian Foreign Minister warning that "The no-fly zone does not stipulate hitting ground targets" and "The resolution [UN Security Council Resolution 1973] does not stipulate targeting civilian targets or targets not related to the military." The Chinese foreign ministry issued similar concerns on the day of the attack.

The following day Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin stated: "[W]hen the whole of so-called civilized society gangs up on one small country, destroying infrastructure that has been built over generations, is it good or bad? Personally I do not like it....What kind of no-fly zone is this if they are striking palaces every night?"

As to the true intentions behind the West's war against Libya, he added: "Libya has the

biggest oil resources in Africa and the fourth largest gas resources. It raises the question: isn't that the main object of interest to those operating there?"

On the 27th of last month the Los Angeles Times reported that "Frustrated at their inability to break the military deadlock in Libya...NATO commanders are expanding their air war by launching strikes against military command facilities and other regime buildings used by Libyan leader Moammar Kadafi and his top aides."

An air strike against a broadcasting facility in Tripoli on the 25th, which temporarily knocked Libya's state television off the air, "was the first sign of the new target list."

With the assistance of recently deployed U.S. Predator drones transmitting video images for bombing raids and missile attacks as well as wielding Hellfire missiles themselves, which have been used by the U.S. to kill over 2,000 people in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (last month the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan estimated that 957 innocent civilians were killed in 2010), "some NATO officials say the goal is to strike directly at the pillars of the regime, including Kadafi, in the heart of Tripoli."

The Times of London wrote shortly before President Barack Obama authorized missile attacks by American drones in Libya:

"The Predator, armed with two Hellfires, has a range of 3200km and can stay in the air for 24 hours. The Reaper, with 14 Hellfires or a combination of weapons including two 226kg Paveway II laser-guided bombs, has a range of 5150km and can remain airborne for up to 28 hours. Italy has six of its own Predators, based at Pisa."

"This is a shift, absolutely," a senior NATO officer was cited by the Los Angeles Times as saying on April 26. "We're picking up attacks on...command-and-control facilities. If [Gaddafi] happens to be in one of those buildings, all the better."

While in the Netherlands on April 21, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signalled a far longer war against Libya than many of her fellow NATO participants may have anticipated, stating: "We've been at this a relatively short period of time. I would remind you that the United States and other partners bombed targets in Serbia for 78 days."

On April 26 the New York Times ran a feature called "NATO Says It Is Broadening Attacks on Libya Targets," which stated:

"NATO planners say the allies are stepping up attacks on palaces, headquarters, communications centers and other prominent institutions supporting the Libyan government....Officials in Europe and in Washington said that the strikes were meant to reduce the government's ability...link by link, the command, communications and supply chains required for sustaining military operations."

The article quoted retired Air Force general John Jumper, who was commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe and of Allied Air Forces Central Europe during NATO's 78-day bombing war against Yugoslavia in 1999, as acknowledging:

"It was when we went in and began to disturb important and symbolic sites in Belgrade, and began to bring to a halt the middle-class life in Belgrade, that [Yugoslav President Slobodan] Milosevic's own people began to turn on him. They began to question why the whole thing in

Kosovo was going on, because it was ruining the country.”

What was ruining the country was an unremitting, merciless aerial onslaught not only, and not so much, against Yugoslav federal and Serbian military targets in the province of Kosovo as against civilian infrastructure – and civilians themselves – throughout the nation, even in opposition-controlled Montenegro and major Serbian cities with opposition governments.

After having exhausted all identified military targets in three days, 1,000 U.S. and NATO aircraft flew 38,000 combat missions over a nation of barely 100,000 square kilometers – roughly one-seventeenth the size of Libya – for another 75 days.

Most everything became a so-called target of opportunity, an excuse for long-range bombers to lighten their load for the flight back to base: Bridges over the Danube River, civilian convoys, factories, power stations, water treatment plants, oil refineries, broadcasting facilities (on April 23 the headquarters of Radio Television of Serbia was bombed, killing 16 employees), the headquarters of pro-government political parties, hospitals (including a maternity ward), apartment complexes, passenger trains, religious processions, a residence of the president and, on May 7, the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The last resulted in three Chinese citizens being killed and 20 wounded.

In a technique recently replicated by the U.S. in northwest Pakistan, Western warplanes waited for rescuers to arrive at the scene of their carnage, then doubled back to attack relief workers.

Tomahawk cruise missiles were fired from U.S. warships in the Mediterranean Sea and cluster bombs, depleted uranium weapons, graphite bombs and other death-dealing ordnance were unleashed by NATO combat aircraft.

In the infamous words of New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman:

“It should be lights out in Belgrade: Every power grid, water pipe, bridge, road and war-related factory has to be targeted. Like it or not, we are at war with the Serbian nation...and the stakes have to be very clear: Every week you ravage Kosovo is another decade we will set your country back by pulverizing you. You want 1950? We can do 1950. You want 1389? We can do 1389 too.”

This was terror bombing of an entire nation, an entire people.

In the same article the above quote appeared in, Friedman wrote that “if NATO’s only strength is that it can bomb forever, then it has to get every ounce out of that. Let’s at least have a real air war.”

Having failed to bomb Yugoslavia into capitulation in the first round of air attacks, NATO demonstrated how truly “humanitarian” the world’s first putative humanitarian war was.

It is now reprising the role in Libya.

The U.S. and Britain launched over 110 cruise missiles into Libya on the first day of what is now an over six-week war against the country. In the first twelve days at least 160 Tomahawk and other missiles were fired against government military and civilian targets and hundreds of air missions were flown over the nation.

Since NATO assumed command of the war on March 31, almost 5,000 sorties, 2,000 of them (in NATO parlance) strike sorties have been carried out.

Having weeks earlier destroyed scores of military and so-called dual use assets, including non-military targets like trucks, sport-utility vehicles and cars, and sites – storage facilities and broadcasting and telecommunications centers – NATO has been moving in for the kill in the Libyan capital. Literally for the kill.

Failing to induce anyone in Gaddafi's inner circle to murder him – such calls were made publicly even before the war commenced – NATO has been attempting to execute the task itself.

On the night of May 1 many in the world expected the news that President Obama would address the nation on an undisclosed national security matter to result in his announcing that, not Osama bin Laden, but Muammar Gaddafi had been killed in a military operation.

Obama's next ad hoc press conference or remarks to the nation may reveal just that development. If they don't attempt to explain that the destruction of the Chinese or Russian embassy in Tripoli was an accident, that an outdated map had been employed. "Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones due to this unfortunate mishap."

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