

Pentagon Plans for Renewed War in Libya

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Reports abound of foreign troops presence and plans for major western deployment

Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was quoted recently as saying that the United States is preparing in conjunction with its imperialist allies a renewed military campaign in Libya.

Speaking as if the U.S. had a limited or even non-existent role in the current military and security crisis in the North African state, Pentagon officials along with other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) including France, Britain and Italy are saying they are motivated by the instability and threat of terrorism posed by the situation particularly the seizure of territory along the western Mediterranean coast by the so-called "Islamic State."

Gen. Dunford said with reference to a deepening interventionist policy toward Libya, "You want to take decisive military action to check ISIL's expansion and at the same time you want to do it in such a way that's supportive of a long-term political process.... I think it's pretty clear to all of us — French, U.S. alike — that whatever we do is going to be in conjunction with the new government," referring to the neo-colonial dominated regime that United Nations Libyan envoy Martin Kobler has been attempting to mold together.

There are two rival regimes stemming from a split within the political forces which were installed in the aftermath of the war of regime change carried out in 2011. Rebel organizations, including many who had been labelled as "terrorists", were funded, armed, given diplomatic support and media acceptance by the U.S. State Department, the British Foreign Office and others in an effort to impose them as "legitimate" leaders of the oil-rich country.

At present the Pentagon and State Department efforts are ostensibly being carried out against the growing influence of the so-called Islamic State which has taken control of several cities and towns on the Mediterranean coast. Washington has been fighting a low-level war against IS in Iraq, Syria and now Libya. Nonetheless, the intervention of the Russian Federation during concluding months of 2015 has been rejected by the administration of President Barack Obama as unwarranted interference designed to bolster the internationally-recognized government of President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus.

However, with specific reference to Libya, Gen. Dunford stresses that action needs to be taken soon, perhaps not days but weeks, he has emphasized in statement to the press. "My perspective is we need to do more. Quickly is weeks not hours" the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted.

Unity Under Neo-colonialism

Setting the stage for such an intervention has been politically dependent upon the securing of a purported unity accord between the two rival factions claiming “legitimacy” in the North African state. Although there have been numerous announcements of an agreement, most ranking elements within the General National Congress in Tripoli and the House of Representatives in Tobruk have rejected the terms of the peace treaty.

In addition to problems between both Libyan camps, some have rejected the notion of a foreign military occupation. If the elements opposed to imperialist intervention maintain their position, it could easily signal a much more complicated and contentious tenure for the proposed force of 6,000 troops which will ostensibly be led by Italy, the former colonial power in Libya prior to independence in 1951.

An article published by Colin Freeman on January 21 said “A senior figure in Libya’s new unity government has warned that the country may be unwilling to accept British troops in its fight against Isis’s growing presence. Ahmed Mateeq, the newly appointed deputy prime minister, said that Libya ‘did not need’ to take up the offer from Britain of 1,000 soldiers to train Libyan troops.” (Telegraph, UK)

Such a statement delivered only a few days after the announcement of a unity accord aimed at ending a year-and-a-half of civil war between the U.S.-backed forces installed by Washington and Brussels, could signal the unravelling of the entire scheme. If imperialist forces are fired on by Libyan political groups who are supposedly party to the UN-brokered agreement, this could bring an even higher degree of instability to the country and the region.

Freeman in the same above-mentioned article pointed out that “Mr Mateeq said that while Western help was welcome in terms of ‘logistical and technical support’, most Libyans would not accept the presence of foreign troops on their soil. ‘This is highly sensitive for Libyans and we prefer to look after the Libyan soil ourselves. At the moment I don’t think we could accept that, although we do view the British as our friends and allies.”

Mateeq is a member of the 32-member ministerial regime established in late January capping off more than 18 months of heated talks mediated by Kobler, a career German diplomat who has been involved in other imperialist war scenarios including Iraq and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Even if Kobler and his western backers can strong arm the divided rival regimes into accepting the unity accord this does not take into consideration the hundreds of other armed militias which are roaming the country acting in many cases as the law unto themselves.

The Telegraph correspondent Freeman emphasized that “Contrary to Mr Mateeq’s remarks, diplomats close to the UN negotiations on the new unity government said last weekend that they thought the new unity government was likely to accept the British offer [of indefinite foreign occupation], as long as the troops were confined to a training role.”

Nonetheless, he continues, “A previous British training arrangement for Libyan troops ended in chaos two years ago when Libyan soldiers stationed at Basingbourn Barracks were accused of sexual assault. Diplomats say that with hindsight, the mission should have been carried out on Libyan rather than UK soil.”

Moreover, a report by the Al-Arabiya news website on January 23 claimed that Russian troops were also present in Libya purportedly in support of the unity accord negotiated by the UN envoy Kobler. This article says “Dozens of British, Russia and American troops have arrived in Libya in support for the weak internationally-recognized government in Tobruk, London-based daily Asharq al-Awsat reported. The daily also said French troops are expected to arrive soon for the same purpose.”

This article also says “The officers and soldiers are currently stationed in Jamal Abdulnasir military base south of Tobruk where the parliament is holding its sessions in the city. Witnesses in the base, meanwhile, said the number of foreign troops has grown to 500 in the past three weeks, but a security official, who spoke under the condition of anonymity, said they are just dozens.”

The claims of Russian involvement remain to be verified. Russia has played a critical role in defending the Syria government by assisting the national military in retaking large swaths of territory inside the embattled state.

Libya and the presidential elections for 2016

These discussions are taking place amid the presidential primary campaigns where one leading Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, played a key role in the blockades, massive bombing and rebel ground war against the Jamahiriya government led by Col. Muammar Gaddafi five years ago. Apart from the Congressional hearings held last year over the attacks on the Benghazi compound occupied by Ambassador Christopher Stevens along with diplomatic personnel and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) personnel in September 2012, the question of the role of Clinton in the Libyan destabilization, bombing and subsequent chaotic security situation which has fostered instability across North and West Africa has not been brought to the debates or evoked by the corporate media.

The region is far more unstable than at any time in over four decades when a war was fought between Egypt and Israel in 1973, prompting an oil embargo and the consequent economic crisis inside the U.S. during this period. Later on in 1978-79, the Egyptian government of the-then President Anwar Sadat, under tremendous pressure from Washington, signed a separate peace agreement with Tel Aviv.

This agreement with Israel effectively neutralized the role of Cairo in the struggle for the independence of Palestine. At present the bulk of discussion centering around North African and Middle Eastern affairs focuses on the role of IS, al-Qaeda and other so-called “Islamist extremist organizations.”

This narrative provides a rationale and political justification for a permanent imperialist occupation of the regions negating the right to self-determination for the states involved.

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