GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

US Raids Libya and Somalia, Capturing Alleged Al Qaeda Planner

By Alex Lantier
Global Research, October 07, 2013
World Socialist Web Site

Region: Middle East & North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa
Theme: Terrorism, US NATO War Agenda

On Saturday, US commandos launched simultaneous raids in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, and on the Somali coastal town of Barawe, 110 miles south of the Somali capital, Mogadishu, in blatant violation of Libyan and Somali national sovereignty.

The Barawe raid, carried out by Navy SEALs, encountered heavy resistance and was repulsed before it could reach its target, which anonymous US officials said was a "senior leader" of Somalia's Al Qaeda-linked Al Shabab militia. The US raid was apparently in retaliation for the September 21 attack on the luxury Westgate mall in Nairobi, the capital of neighboring Kenya, for which Al Shabab took responsibility. It said the attack was carried out to punish Kenya for its participation in the US-led war against Al Shabab.

US officials said that the Tripoli raid led to the capture of Al Qaeda leader Nazih Abdul-Hamed al-Ruqai, known as Abu Anas al-Liby. They added that he was "no longer in Libya," indicating that he was in US custody, possibly bound for trial in New York City. Al-Liby faces a 2000 grand jury indictment accusing him of helping plan Al Qaeda's 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania., which killed 224 people.

There were conflicting reports about al-Liby's capture. Some said he was seized by US Special Forces after morning prayers near Tripoli's Airport Road. Other reports said that he was seized by Libyan forces to obtain the $5 million reward offered by Washington for his capture.

Speaking for his mother at the family's home in Tripoli, al-Liby's 20-year-old son Abdullah al-Ruqai told reporters his father had been seized by local fighters: "They had a Libyan look and Libyan accents. They took him out of his car after breaking the window. They put him in a Mercedes and left."

Al-Liby's son denied that his father was involved in the 1998 embassy attacks, adding that his family had hired a lawyer to resolve the charges. He asked that his father be tried in Libya: "If they have any evidence, they should show it. I agree my father can go to trial, but it should be here in Libya."

He said that his father had returned to Libya in October 2012—a year after the end of the NATO war in Libya which, relying on Al Qaeda-linked forces including veterans of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), toppled the regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

Hashim Bishr, the head of the Tripoli Supreme Security Committee (SSC) set up after the NATO war, echoed the family's accounts that al-Liby had been captured by local forces.

Libya's weak central government, fearing an eruption of popular anger after the US raid, issued a statement demanding an explanation: "The Libyan government is following the news of a kidnapping of a Libyan citizen who is wanted by US authorities. The Libyan government has contacted US authorities to ask them to provide an explanation."

Islamist militia commander Abdul Bassit Haroun, whose forces now work with the central government, claimed the Libyan was not informed of the raid: "It is very bad that no state institutions had the slightest information about this process, nor do they have a force which was able to capture [al-Liby]. This means the Libyan state simply does not exist."

US officials hailed the raids as a success, despite being held off in Barawe. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel issued a brief statement, declaring: "I want to commend all of the service members who were involved in the planning and execution of these two operations, which demonstrate the unparalleled precision, global reach, and capabilities of the United States military."

From Indonesia, where he is attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, US Secretary of State John Kerry declared: "We hope that this makes clear that the United States of America will never stop in its effort to hold accountable those who conduct acts of terror. Those members of Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations literally can run, but they can't hide."

In fact, the raids emerge from the de facto alliance and operational link that Washington has established with Al Qaeda-linked forces in much of the Middle East and Africa. Washington relied on such forces as the bulk of their ground troops in the war in Libya and then turned to Al Qaeda-linked forces as the spearhead of their war to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The US "war on terror" in the region, far from fighting Al Qaeda, has boosted it immensely, which US imperialism has seized upon as a pretext to launch more neo-colonial attacks in the region.

US allies such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia have plunged large funds into supporting such terrorist operations, which were aided by the broad dissemination of weapons from Libyan stockpiles in the chaos in Libya that followed Gaddafi's fall.

As with the original Al Qaeda group led by Osama bin Laden, which aided the CIA in the 1980s war in Afghanistan against the USSR, the US alliance with these reactionary Islamist forces came back to haunt the US. While the "blowback" after the Soviet-Afghan war included the 1998 embassy bombings and the September 11 attacks, the war in Libya and Syria have already led to events like the Westgate mall attack or the September 11, 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi. There, Islamist forces attacked and killed US Ambassador Christopher Stevens.

The *New York Times* commented that al-Liby's capture was a break with "Washington's previous reluctance to send American Special Operations forces into Libya." Previously, the US government "refrained from such interventions for fear of setting off a backlash that could destabilize or overwhelm Libya's fledgling transitional government … But American officials have now apparently run out of patience, signaling a new willingness to try to apprehend suspects in the Benghazi attack, as well."

In Somalia, central government officials said that the likely target of the US raid in Barawe was a Chechen Islamist commander, and Somali police claimed seven people were killed in the raid.

Initial reports from Al Shabab claimed the attackers were British and Turkish Special Forces, one of whom killed. Al Shabab officials said, “Westerners in boats attacked our base at Barawe beach, and one was martyred from our side. No planes or helicopters took part in the fight. The attackers left weapons, medicine, and stains of blood, and we chased them. Although we both exchanged grenades, the attackers had silencer guns, so the weapons heard were ours.”

British, Turkish, and French officials all denied that their forces were involved, however, and after initially declining comment, US officials took responsibility for the raid.

NATO forces have repeatedly invaded the region of Barawe, where Al Shabab leader Ahmed Ali Godane reportedly resided in the past. The town was attacked by US forces in 2009, killing six, and by French forces in January in a failed mission to rescue a captured intelligence agent. US, British, and French warships maintain a permanent presence along strategic oil shipping lanes off the Somali coast, US and France have military bases in neighboring Djibouti, and the US has repeatedly launched drone strikes in Somalia.

Yesterday Al Shabab spokesman Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab denounced the US-backed regime in Somalia that is fighting Al Shabab: “The apostate Somali government is nothing in Somalia, no one asked them for permission to carry out the attack.”

He also denied that any senior Al Shabab commanders were present in Barawe when the US Navy SEALs attacked on Saturday: “Ordinary fighters lived in the house, and they bravely counter-attacked and chased off the attackers.”

The original source of this article is World Socialist Web Site
Copyright © Alex Lantier, World Socialist Web Site, 2013

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: Alex Lantier

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca