

## What Hillary Knew about Libya. To Justify “Regime Change”, U.S. Routinely Spreads Rumors.

By [Robert Parry](#)

Global Research, January 13, 2016

[Consortium News](#) 12 January 2016

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

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [NATO'S WAR ON LIBYA](#)

*To justify U.S. “regime changes,” the U.S. government has routinely spread rumors and made other dubious claims which – even when later doubted or debunked – are left in place indefinitely as corrosive propaganda, eating away at the image of various “enemies” and deforming public opinion.*

Even though this discredited propaganda can have a long half-life – continuing to contaminate the public’s ability to perceive reality for years – President Barack Obama and his administration have shown no inclination to undertake a kind of HAZMAT clean-up of the polluted information environment that American citizens have been forced to live in.



Image: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testifies before Congress on Jan. 23, 2013, about the fatal attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, on Sept. 11, 2012. (Photo from C-SPAN coverage)

A recent case in point was the emergence – in the State Department’s New Year’s Eve release of more than 3,000 emails to and from former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – of evidence that two key propaganda themes used to advance violent “regime change” in Libya in 2011 may have originated with rebel-inspired rumors passed on by Clinton’s private adviser Sidney Blumenthal.

A March 27, 2011 [email](#) from Blumenthal reminded Clinton that

“I communicated more than a week ago on this story — [Libyan leader Muammar] Qaddafi placing bodies to create PR stunts about supposed civilian casualties as a result of Allied bombing — though underlining it was a rumor. But now, as you know, [Defense Secretary] Robert Gates gives credence to it.”

Blumenthal’s email, which was slugged “Rumor: Q[addafi]’s rape policy,” then plunged

ahead into his new rumor:

“Sources now say, again rumor (that is, this information comes from the rebel side and is unconfirmed independently by Western intelligence), that Qaddafi has adopted a rape policy and has even distributed Viagra to troops. The incident at the Tripoli press conference involving a woman claiming to be raped is likely to be part of a much larger outrage. Will seek further confirmation.”

A month later, this bizarre Viagra-rape angle became part of a United Nations presentation by then U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice who brought up the Viagra charge in a debate about the evils of Muammar Gaddafi’s regime.

A U.N. diplomat at the closed session on April 28, 2011, [told The Guardian](#) that

“It was during a discussion about whether there is moral equivalence between the Gaddafi forces and the rebels. She listed human rights abuses by Gaddafi’s forces, including snipers shooting children in the street and the Viagra story.”

On Blumenthal’s other propaganda point, it’s not clear where Defense Secretary Gates got the idea to accuse Gaddafi of “staging” scenes of U.S.-inflicted carnage, but Blumenthal’s email indicates that he was disseminating that rumor which might have been picked up by Gates, rather than independently confirmed by Gates. (It’s also true that the “staging” excuse has been used before when evidence emerges of U.S. bombs killing civilians.)

#### Media Self-Interest

Yet, regardless of the truth or falsity of such U.S. claims and counter-claims, the chance that someone inside Official Washington is going to review the lies and exaggerations used to rationalize a major U.S. foreign policy initiative – in this case, the violent overthrow of the Gaddafi regime – to, in effect, “clear” Gaddafi’s name is remote at best.

The few cases of the media debunking U.S. propaganda, such as exposing the made-up claims about Iraqi soldiers killing babies on incubators before the Persian Gulf War in 1990-91, are rare exceptions to the rule. Even rarer are cases when the U.S. government admits that it relied on false information, such as the intelligence community recanting its pre-invasion claims about Iraq hiding WMD stockpiles in 2002-03.

The much more common approach is to simply leave the decaying propaganda in place and move on to the next target of opportunity. There is little benefit for anyone to undertake the painstaking work of separating whatever slices of truth exist within the rot of lies and exaggerations that were used to justify some war.



Image: President Barack Obama at the White House with National Security Adviser Susan Rice and Samantha Power (right), his U.N. ambassador. (Photo credit: Pete Souza)

The way mainstream journalism usually works in America is that a reporter who challenges U.S. government propaganda aimed at a foreign “enemy” is putting his or her career at risk. The reporter’s patriotism will be questioned amid suggestions that he or she is a “fill-in-the-blank-with-the-villain’s-name” apologist.

And since the reality – whatever it is – is usually fuzzy, there is almost never any vindication for a brave stance. So, the smart career play is to go along with the propaganda or stay silent.

A similar reality exists inside the U.S. government. Honest intelligence analysts can expect no rewards if they debunk one of these propaganda themes, especially after a number of important U.S. officials have gone out publicly and sold the falsehood to the people. Making the Secretary of State or the Defense Secretary or the President look bad is not a great career move.

### France’s Designs

Plus, the propaganda themes, which stress American righteousness in standing up to foreign evil, are useful in obscuring the self-interested motives that often circle around a killing field like the one that Libya has become.

For instance, another Blumenthal memo to Clinton explained France’s political and pecuniary interests in toppling Gaddafi and thus thwarting his ambitious plans to use Libya’s oil wealth as a means of freeing parts of Africa from French domination.

In an April 2, 2011 [email](#), Blumenthal informed Clinton that sources close to one of Gaddafi sons were reporting that “Qaddafi’s government holds 143 tons of gold, and a similar amount in silver” and the hoard had been moved from the Libyan Central Bank in Tripoli closer to the border with Niger and Chad.

“This gold was accumulated prior to the current rebellion and was intended to be used to establish a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar. This plan was designed to provide the Francophone African Countries with an alternative to the French franc (CFA).”

Blumenthal then added that

“According to knowledgeable individuals, this quantity of gold and silver is valued at more than \$7 billion. French intelligence officers discovered this plan shortly after the current rebellion began, and this was one of the factors that influenced President Nicolas Sarkozy’s decision to commit France to the attack on Libya.”

The email added:

“According to these individuals, Sarkozy’s plans are driven by the following issues: a. A desire to gain a greater share of Libya oil production, b. Increase French influence in North Africa, c. Improve his internal political situation in France, d. Provide the French military with an opportunity to reassert its position in the world, e. Address the concern of his advisors over Qaddafi’s long term plans to supplant France as the dominant power in Francophone Africa.”

In an earlier [email](#), dated March 27, 2011, Blumenthal also discussed the French interests in the conflict, citing “knowledgeable individuals” who said that Sarkozy “is pressing to have France emerge from this crisis as the principal foreign ally of any new government that takes power.”



Image: French President Nicolas Sarkozy

So do you think it would it be easier for the Obama administration to rally American support behind this “regime change” by explaining how the French wanted to steal Libya’s wealth and maintain French neocolonial influence over Africa – or would Americans respond better to propaganda themes about Gaddafi passing out Viagra to his troops so they could rape more women while his snipers targeted innocent children? Bingo!

Seeing No Jihadists

In selling the Libyan policy to the American people, it was also important to downplay another part of the crisis: that Gaddafi was right when he warned of the danger from Islamic radicals, including Al Qaeda’s North African affiliate, operating in eastern Libya.

Gaddafi’s original military offensive was aimed at these groups, but the Obama administration’s propagandists twisted the issue into Gaddafi supposedly committing “genocide” against the people of eastern Libya, thus requiring a U.S.-led “responsibility to protect” or “R2P” mission.

However, in the emails to Clinton, Blumenthal conveyed the actual reality – that these supposedly innocent anti-Gaddafi rebels in the east indeed included jihadist elements. He wrote:

“Sarkozy is also concerned about continuing reports that radical/terrorist groups such as the Libyan Fighting Groups and Al Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) are infiltrating the NLC [the rebel’s National Transitional Council] and its military command.

“Accordingly, he [Sarkozy] asked [a] sociologist ... who has long established ties to Israel, Syria, and other nations in the Middle East, to use his contacts to

determine the level of influence AQIM and other terrorist groups have inside of the NLC. Sarkozy also asked for reports setting out a clear picture of the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the rebel leadership.”

Blumenthal added:

“Senior European security officials caution that AQIM is watching developments in Libya, and elements of that organization have been in touch with tribes in the southeastern part of the country. These [European] officials are concerned that in a post-Qaddafi Libya, France and other western European countries must move quickly to ensure that the new government does not allow AQIM and others to set up small, semi-autonomous local entities — or ‘Caliphates’ — in the oil and gas producing regions of southeastern Libya.”

In other words, the danger of Islamic terror groups exploiting the power vacuum that the Obama administration and its Western allies were creating inside Libya was well understood in March 2011, but the supposed “R2P” mission pressed ahead nevertheless.

The “R2P” advocates also turned a blind eye to evidence that black Africans working for Gaddafi’s government were being systematically rounded up and murdered. As Blumenthal reported to Clinton, “Speaking in strict confidence, one rebel commander stated that his troops continue to summarily execute all foreign mercenaries captured in the fighting.”

These so-called “mercenaries” were contractors from black Africa where many people viewed Gaddafi as a champion of the continent’s development, independent of the former Western imperial powers and the harsh demands of the International Monetary Fund. While some of these blacks were part of Gaddafi’s security structure, others were involved in construction projects.



Image: Slain Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi

Whatever their assignments, executing prisoners of war is a war crime – and the image of U.S.-backed rebels singling out black Africans for execution turns the pretense of an “R2P” mission on its head – or perhaps all those noble humanitarian arguments were just phony from the start.

As Brad Hoff of the Levant Report [wrote](#),

“historians of the 2011 NATO war in Libya will be sure to notice a few of the truly explosive confirmations contained in the [new emails](#): admissions of rebel war crimes, special ops trainers inside Libya from nearly the start of protests, Al Qaeda embedded in the U.S. backed opposition, Western nations jockeying for access to Libyan oil, the nefarious origins of the absurd Viagra mass rape claim, and concern over Gaddafi’s gold and silver reserves threatening European currency.”

### Reality’s Hard Sell

But it probably would have been a hard sell to the American people if the U.S. government explained the dark side of the “R2P” mission – that it involved systematic executions of blacks and rapacious Western officials grasping for oil and gold – as well as creating a vacuum for jihadists. Instead, it worked much better to promote wild rumors about Gaddafi’s perfidy.

It is in this way that U.S. citizens, the “We the People” who were supposed to be the nation’s sovereigns, are treated more like cattle herded to the slaughterhouse.

Some of us did try to warn the public about these risks. For instance, on March 25, 2011, days before Blumenthal’s emails, I described the hazard from the neocon “regime change” strategies in Libya and Syria, writing:

“In rallying U.S. support for these rebellions, the neocons risked repeating the mistake they made by pushing the U.S. invasion of Iraq. They succeeded in ousting Saddam Hussein, who had long been near the top of Israel’s enemies list, but the war also removed him as a bulwark against both Islamic extremists and Iranian influence in the Persian Gulf. ...

“By embracing these uprisings, the neocons invited unintended consequences, including further Islamic radicalization of the region and deepening anti-Americanism. Indeed, a rebel victory over Gaddafi risked putting extremists from an al-Qaeda affiliate in a powerful position inside Libya.

“The major U.S. news media aided the neocon cause by focusing on Gaddafi’s historic ties to terrorism, including the dubious charge that he was behind the Pan Am 103 bombing in 1988. There was little attention paid to his more recent role in combating the surge in al-Qaeda activity, especially in eastern Libya, the base of the revolt against him.” [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Neocons Regroup on Libyan War.”](#)]

Though the 2011 concerns about Al Qaeda have since morphed into worries about its spinoff, the Islamic State, the larger point remains valid regarding Libya, which descended into the status of failed state after Gaddafi’s ouster and his brutal torture-murder on Oct. 20, 2011. Secretary Clinton greeted the news of Gaddafi’s demise with glee, [exulting](#), “we came, we saw, he died” and then laughed. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Hillary Clinton’s Failed Libya Doctrine.”](#)]

More than four years later, the Obama administration still struggles to piece together some order from the chaos in Libya, where Western governments have even abandoned their Tripoli embassies. Meanwhile, the Islamic State and other jihadist groups continue to expand



their control of Libyan territory.

In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad has hung on despite continued efforts by the Obama administration and its regional Sunni allies to remove him. The four years of war – waged mostly by jihadists armed and financed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Western powers – have killed a quarter million people and made millions homeless, now spreading the Mideast's disorders into Europe where the refugee crisis is dividing the European Union.

Of course, in the U.S. mainstream media, the Syrian deaths and destruction are blamed almost entirely on Assad, much as the conflict in Libya was blamed on Gaddafi and the U.S. invasion of Iraq was blamed on Saddam Hussein. In the world created by U.S. propaganda, it is always some other guy's fault.

In the Syrian case, the major decaying propaganda theme that continues to contaminate public understanding of the crisis has been the accusation that Assad "gassed his own people" with sarin on Aug. 21, 2013. Although independent evidence has long been pointing in the direction of a rebel provocation, perhaps aided by Turkey, the old rotting propaganda is routinely dug up by neocons and their liberal interventionist sidekicks to justify why "Assad must go!" [See Consortiumnews.com's "[The Collapsing Syria-Sarin Case](#)."]

In the case of Libya, Blumenthal's emails provide a useful window into what was actually happening behind the scenes – and what Secretary of State Clinton knew.

*Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, America's Stolen Narrative, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).*

The original source of this article is [Consortium News](#)

Copyright © [Robert Parry](#), [Consortium News](#), 2016

---

**[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)**

**[Become a Member of Global Research](#)**

Articles by: [Robert Parry](#)

**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](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://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](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)