

BRIEFING

THE TERRORIST THREAT LINKED TO THE LIBYAN CRISIS

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On March 24, 2011, the **British Security Service** (BSS also known as MI5) **warned of possible retaliation attacks by “Libyan expatriates” in response to the British participation to the “Odyssey Dawn” operation.** The BSS said it intercepted, shortly before the beginning of the operation, “conversations” in which people under surveillance said “*we must fight*”.

On March 30, **the United Kingdom expelled 5 of the 15 members of the diplomatic staff of the Libyan embassy.** They were accused of “**attempting to intimidate supporters of the Libyan opposition**” and **suspected of spying and of a possible involvement in the planning of terrorist operations.**

This came as **other security and intelligence services in Europe and in other parts of the world examined if it was likely to see Colonel Gaddafi using the terrorism as a revenge weapon against the international coalition.**

Actually ESISC assesses that with the operation in Libya, **we face two different terrorist threats:** one coming from Colonel **Gaddafi’s regime** and the other one from the **Islamists movements.**

1) Gaddafi’s regime terrorist threat

It makes **no doubt that Colonel Gaddafi is eager to use the terrorism against his enemies.** He has a long history in doing so (see below) and never had any political or moral restraint in terrorism support and use. Actually, Colonel Gaddafi has very few real options to oppose the international community. He could hope that, one day, an allied jet will be shot down by what remains of his anti-air defense, but this would not be a great achievement. Apart fighting the rebels on the ground as vigorously as he can, the only real possibility he has is to return to terrorism.

The Colonel clearly told the media this option is open, threatening to **hit “maritime and air traffic in the Mediterranean”**, vowing a **“no limit war”** and saying that **“all North Africa” was at war**. He said also that **“France and the U.K. will regret the intervention”** which sounds like a threat.

The only question is: as he the real possibility to do it and, if so, when? And where?

We assess that, for the moment, the Libyan authorities around Colonel Gaddafi are mainly focusing on the ground operations against the rebels, but **we think that, in the same times, Gaddafi’s operators are scouting and examining various possible targets for terrorist operations**. Will they try to dot it as deeply covered as possible and keep the opportunity of the **plausible denial** or will they go for operations that could easily be linked to them and expose Libya to a **new U.N. resolution and a subsequent escalation in the military offensive?**

2) The three “W”: When? Where? Who?

For the **“When?”** question, **we assess it will be: as soon as three elements exist: a target making sense, a real operational capacity to hit and something to win by acting so**. The third condition is not the more important as **Colonel Gaddafi could also decide to go for terrorism if he feels his end is near**. In this case he will be guided by a kind of **“Hitler’s complex”**: **“If I die, if the regime I created is condemned, so the world could die with me”**.

The second question is **“Where?”**

This question is, actually, linked to another one: **“who?”** In the past, **the Libyan embassies were deeply and frequently involved in terrorist operation worldwide**. But the times being what they are, **scores of diplomats have defected** to the opposition, and there is not a lot of “diplomats” to rely on. A plotter inside an embassy could also fear he will be denounced by the next would-be-defector. Last but not least: one could estimate that the diplomats **remaining loyal to Gaddafi are under strict surveillance** by the security services of the countries they are in charge in. So **we don’t think using embassies as terror hubs is a reasonable option for the Libyan planners**.

The **easier – and most comfortable - solution would be, for Gaddafi’s intelligence, to use mercenary groups**, like some **radical Palestinian fractions** which were largely used in the past. Or like some **African radical groups** which were generously funded those last years by Gaddafi’s regime. But this option will automatically limit the area in which Gaddafi’s terrorists could strike as **those groups haven’t a lot of affiliates or sympathizers in Europe, and most of them are well known and under surveillance**.

This drives us to the **“Where?”** question.

Obviously, the **top-on-the-list** of the likely targets for colonel Gaddafi are the **United Kingdom and France** – who were instrumental in the mobilisation of the international community and the building of the coalition. **They are followed by**

the United States (an old and usual enemy of Colonel Gaddafi **but also by the Arab countries taking part in the coalition** as they are seen as betraying an Arab regime. Last but not least, **every single national participating in the operations** could be seen as a legitimate target. **This includes particularly Belgium which is host to the NATO headquarter and the European Union.**

We assess that, in most of the cases, **it will be difficult to attack those countries at home** (with, maybe, **the exception of Italy and Greece**, were Gaddafi's services and their mercenaries proxies have a long experience) as Gaddafi's operators could not rely on many support there and as those country's security services are efficient and fully aware of the threat.

So we think that **the most likely is to see Tripoli trying to organize terrorist attacks against Western or Arab interests in Africa, or maybe in Asia, two continents where they supported a score of terrorist actions those last 30 years and where they have a lot of "client organizations"**.

Another option would be to attack American, European or Arab airlines from an African country, as security is not as strong as it is in Europe in most African airports.

3) The Islamist terrorist threat

It is extremely difficult to assess the reality of the Islamist terrorist threat linked to the Libyan crisis.

It is crystal-clear that the first interest of the Islamist organisations, linked to al-Qaeda or not, is to see Gaddafi's regime falling as soon as possible. This will probably open a instability period and offer those organisations a **fantastic opportunity** to install training camps and operational bases and **enlarge the scope of their operation in North Africa.**

So it **doesn't make a lot of sense for them to attack the coalition** which is, actually, "doing the job"...

But in the same time, one could not ignore that **Abdelmalek Droukdel, the national emir of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM), issued a 12-minutes audio statement, last week, in which he called for jihad in Libya "against the West and namely against the US".** He also informed that the terrorists are preparing for a **"long war' in Libya against "the crusaders and their allies"**.

"We will not leave our oil to the U.S., France, the U.K. and other crusaders' states which form a coalition against us". He also warned Libyans that the international intervention against Gaddafi troops should be considered as a **"new crusade against Muslims"**.

Separately **Libyan terrorist leader Jamal Ibrahim Al-Chtioui Al-Masrati** aka **"Atya Allah"** declared in an audio-message that was posted on radical

websites that Al-Qaeda intends to proclaim the “Islamic Emirate in Libya” in the coming days. He also called to launch jihad against the countries who are involved in the military intervention against Libya.

In one hand, as stated above, al-Qaeda and its proxies are eager to see Gaddafi defeated but in the other hand, this situation offers them the possibility to make their “comeback” on the international scene and pose as the protectors of the Muslim soil against the “Crusaders”.

We’ll continue to assess those conflicting elements.

4) An overview of the terrorists activities of the Libyan regime

It is mainly **from the seventies to the nineties** that colonel Gaddafi’s regime was involved in direct terrorist actions or in supporting and sponsoring terrorists groups.

Libya, at the time **supported and funded numerous terrorist organisations aiming to attack Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and their allies.**

The (non exhaustive) list of the organisations supported by Gaddafi includes: the **Abu Nidal Organisation**, the **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)**, the **Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)**, the **Japanese Red Army (JRA)**, the **M19 (Colombia)**, the **Irish Republican Army (IRA)** etc.

Some of the terrorist actions ordered or supported by Libya (non exhaustive list) and other signs of Libyan involvement in International terrorism:

- **1989, September 19:** A French DC 10 of the **French company UTA** in flight from Brazzaville to Paris explodes above the Ténéré desert; **170 people are killed**. In a personal letter to President Jacques Chirac, years later, colonel Gaddafi acknowledged the responsibility of “Libyan citizen” and offered to pay the victims families if Libya was not accused as a state ¹
- **1988, July 11:** attack of the **Greek cruise ship “City of Poros”**, in the Mediterranean; **9 are killed and 11 wounded**
- **1988, May, 16:** submachine gun and grenades attack against the **“Acropole Hotel” and the “Sudan Club” in Khartoum**. British are targeted; **8 are killed**
- **1988, April 15:** an **US Air force facility** is bombed in Torrejon, Spain
- **1988, April 14:** attack against an **American military club in Naples (Italy)**: **5 are killed and more than 20 wounded**.
- **1987, October 30:** the French navy boards the ***Eksund II*** in the Atlantic Ocean. The ship is found to carry 40 RPG 7, thousands submachine guns, 10 tons of 106 mm shells, twenty anti-air man portable missiles SAM 7 and other arms and ammunitions. It was proved later that the ***Eksund II* loaded its deadly fret in Tripoli**, on October 14 and that the arms were offered to the **Irish Republican Army** by Gaddafi

¹ The French weekly “**L’Express**” publishes the letter on September 20, 1996.

- **1987, June:** car bomb against the **US embassy in Rome** and launching of missiles against the **UK embassy**
- 1986, December: the Abu Nidal group attacks **El Al passengers in the airports of Vienna and Rome**. 15 are killed and 112 wounded. Libya is said to have funded and ordered the operations.
- **1986, September:** attempted hijacking of a **PANAM plane in Karachi**: 21 are killed and 120 wounded
- **1986, May:** Missiles against the **Canadian, the US and the Japanese embassies in Jakarta**
- **1986, April 5:** Attack against the **La Belle discotheque in Berlin**: 3 killed, 229 wounded
- **1986, April 2:** a bomb kills 4 and injured several others on **TWA Flight 840** flying from Rome to Athens
- **1985, November:** Egypt accuses Libya to be involved in the hijacking of an **Egyptair plane to Malta**. 60 people are killed in the rescue operation
- **1985, May:** Egypt accuses Libya of **car bombs attacks against the US embassy** in Cairo
- **1984, July:** a Libyan pilot defects and says he was **trained to bomb the Aswan High Dam** in Egypt
- **1984, Summer:** several Libyan agents are arrested while trying to enter **Saudi Arabia** with arms
- **April 1983:** Gaddafi supports the **Popular Liberation front of Salvador** and the Colombian M-19. Arms are seized onboard Libyan planes
- **1980 October 30:** Gambia breaks its diplomatic relations with Libya as it is proved that Colonel Gaddafi's services **recruited young Gambians** to form them to subversion and guerilla in military bases in Libya
- **1982: Jordan's King Hussein** escapes a an assignation attempt, after SA-7 missiles missed his plane after take-off. Libya is said to be involved.
- **1973, December 17:** a PANAM plane is hit by a missile at **Fiumicino airport (Rome)**. 30 are killed

Involvement of Libyan embassies in terrorism:

- **2011, March 30:** The **United Kingdom expels 5 “diplomats”** suspected of having attempted to “intimidate opponents”
- **1993, December 10:** Kidnapping, in Cairo, of **Mansour Kikhia²**, former Libyan Ambassador to the United Nations and former Foreign Affairs minister and moderate opponent in exile. An independent investigation ordered by Baha Kikhia (Mansour Kikhia's wife) established that **Brahim BECHARI, Libyan ambassador to the Arab League** and former chief of Intelligence was involved in the abduction, with Abdellah Senoussi, Muamar Gaddafi's brother in law; Kikhia was transferred to Libya in a diplomatic car and no one saw him anymore alive. It is thought that he was executed later
- **1989, September: Abdallah Elazrag, a diplomat in post in Brazzaville** gives to a local correspondent a “important suitcase to deliver in Paris”. The Suitcase explodes in a **French UTA plane, killing 170 people** (see above)

² Mansour Kikhia was one of the four founders of the Libyan League for Human Rioghts (LLHR) which is today a part of the Libyan uprising forces.

- **1987, June 26:** two Libyan citizen **shot dead a Libyan opponent in Roma**. The two killers claim to be members of the Revolutionary Committees, one of Gaddafi's security services. The embassy was involved in supporting them
- **1985, December:** two **Libyan diplomats are expelled from Spain** after the Spanish security uncovers a terrorist plot
- **1985, November:** second attempt to assassinate **Abdul Hamid al-Bakkush in Cairo**
- **1985, October:** new assassination attempt against Libyan opponents in **Greece**. The embassy is involved
- **1984, November:** **Egyptian security services** uncover an assassination attempt against the former Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid al-Bakkush
- **1984, June:** assassination of Libyan opponents in **Greece**
- **1984, April 17:** **Libyan diplomats in London** open fire on an anti-Gaddafi's demonstration in front of the embassy, on St Jame's Square, **Killing the unarmed policewoman officer Yvonne Fletcher (26)**. Ten other people are wounded. Her death results in a ten-days siege of the embassy by the police. **The U.K. expels all the four diplomats and breaks its relations with Libya. Two of the four were rewarded after their return to Libya and were given Cabinet positions**
- **1983** Mustafa Muhamad al-Zaidi, in post in the **Libyan Embassy in Germany** is expelled for having kidnapped and tortured two dissident Libyan students. In 1987, he is appointed Health Minister
- **1983, April:** The **Libyan Chargé d'Affaires is expelled from Switzerland** for having passed arms to local terrorists
- **1980, June:** **Moussa Koussa, Libyan ambassador** to the U.K. is expelled for having threatened Libyan opponents living in Britain
- **1973, August 24:** the Libyan ambassador to the U.K. travels to Amsterdam **to participate in a operational meeting between the PFLP and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, aimed to plan terrorist attacks in Europe**
- **1973, August:** 12 members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in London are supported by the Libyan embassy.

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