

NATO's War on Libya

Rick Rozoff

The relentless and intensifying Western air war against Libya has entered its fourth month. For the first thirteen days, starting on March 19, under the control of US Africa Command and Operation Odyssey Dawn, and thereafter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led Operation Unified Protector, the air assaults represent the second longest armed aggression in NATO's history, surpassing the 78-day bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. Only the now nearly decade-long war in Afghanistan exceeds the current campaign in length.

The US-dominated military bloc not only acknowledges but also fairly boasts of conducting almost 11,000 air missions and over 4,000 combat sorties since March 31. Preceding that, hundreds of air strikes and more than 160 cruise missile attacks were launched by the US, Britain, France and other NATO powers.

Altogether, following in the North African footsteps of Napoleon Bonaparte's France, imperial Britain, Benito Mussolini's Italy, and Adolf Hitler's Germany, Western nations are engaged in the longest war against an African country in modern times, and the most intensive armed aggression against one ever.

A Libyan government spokesman announced that NATO air attacks had killed 718 civilians and wounded 4,067 more between March 19 and May 26. In the interim the North Atlantic military alliance has intensified bombing of the nation's capital, Tripoli, and other parts of the country to an unprecedented level, and introduced British and French helicopter gunship and US Hellfire missile-wielding Predator unmanned aerial vehicles operations.

Rick Rozoff's careful scrutiny of NATO's activities, over many years, is second to none.

On June 1, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen declared that the Alliance had authorized continuation of the war for three more months, until the end of September, and a week later he confirmed that the defence chiefs of NATO's 28 member states, including the Pentagon's Robert Gates, endorsed the decision to extend so-called Operation Unified Protector for another 90 days during a defence ministerial meeting at NATO Headquarters in Belgium.

In addition to the deployment of British Apache and French Gazelle and Tiger attack helicopters (the first equipped with what the *Daily Mirror* described as 'a deadly missile dubbed "the mincer", a gruesome anti-personnel missile containing 80 5-inch-long steel darts called flechettes') the US has dispatched the mammoth *USS George H.W. Bush* nuclear supercarrier with an accompanying strike group to the Mediterranean Sea for what portends a military endgame for the North African state of slightly over six million people.

The above-cited British newspaper recently referred to the *George H.W. Bush*, now on its maiden deployment and at the time engaged in war games, Exercise Saxon Warrior, with the Royal Navy's *HMS Dauntless* and *HMS Gloucester*, as the 'world's most powerful warship,' adding that 'The 97,000-ton *Bush* carries in excess of 70 aircraft from eight squadrons and 5,300 sailors and aircrew'.

On June 6 it anchored off the coast of the Spanish Mediterranean city of Cartagena; as the US Navy disclosed, marking the first time 'the nation's newest Nimitz-class aircraft carrier has visited mainland Europe'.

The *George H.W. Bush* Carrier Strike Group is *en route* to the headquarters of Commander, US Naval Forces Europe and Africa/US 6th Fleet in Naples in the south of Italy, within easy striking distance of Libya.

After 85 days of constant bombardment, which constitutes the longest daily bombing campaign since the Vietnam War, have left smoke clouds rising over Tripoli every night and, increasingly, during the day as well, the Western destruction of government assets and infrastructure, military and civilian, has only begun. As has the war waged against the civilian population by NATO powers, including Libya's former colonial master Italy, without pause, even in the face of African Union peace proposals accepted by the Libyan government.

Almost immediately exceeding even the broadest interpretation of the mandate granted by United Nations Resolution 1973 to protect Libyan civilians, NATO is deliberately and mercilessly executing a campaign to comprehensively impair the Libyan government's ability to function in any capacity – including providing safety and services to its citizens – in a

brutal attempt to convince the population that any alternatives, even the fragmentation of the country and foreign domination and occupation, are superior to continuing to resist an endless reign of terror from the skies.

For the West, the cost of defiance, even of not outright capitulation or merely maintaining a semblance of independence, is death, destruction and the fatal wounding of the nation itself. Examples abound – the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq – with surely more to follow.

Stop NATO

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Dispatch from Greece

We are grateful to our valiant friends at The Paragraph for their regular updates on widespread resistance to the terrible social attacks under way in their country, which included these brief excerpts from Michael Hudson's 'must-read' article published online by CounterPunch (24 June 2011).

The fight for Europe's future is being waged in Athens and other Greek cities to resist financial demands that are the 21st century's version of an outright military attack ... like the Icelanders, the Greek protestors have had their fill of neoliberal-learned ignorance that austerity, unemployment and shrinking markets are the path to prosperity, not deeper poverty ... The Greek crowds demonstrating before Parliament in Syntagma Square are providing their counterpoint to the 'Arab Spring'. But what really can they do ...? The most effective tactic is to demand a national referendum on whether to accept the European Central Bank's terms for austerity, tax increases, public spending cutbacks and sell-offs. This is how Iceland's president stopped his country's leadership from committing the economy to ruinous (and legally unnecessary) payments to Gordon Brown's Labour Party demands and those of the Dutch for the Icesave and even the Kaupthing bailouts ... International law prohibits nations from treating their own nationals differently from foreigners, so all debts in specified categories would have to be annulled to create a Clean Slate. The German Monetary Reform of 1947 imposed by the Allied Powers was the most successful Clean Slate in modern times. Freeing the German economy from debt [including reparations to Greece for the havoc of World War Two, Editors] it became the basis of that nation's economic miracle.