

RELEASE IN PART B1, 1.4 (D)

CONFIDENTIAL

March 18, 2011

Classified by DAS, A/GIS, DoS on 01/29/2016 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason: 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 03/18/2026

For: Hillary
From: Sid
Re: Q's attacks post-UN resolution: Saif's strategy; Mousa Koussa's fears

Note:

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here is the latest report:

With that in mind,

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During the evening of March 18, 2011 senior advisors to Saif al Qaddafi stated in confidence that the passage of the UN resolution authorizing force against Libya's forces came as a surprise to Muammar Qaddafi, who had believed that the governments of Russia and China would block such a move. Qaddafi continues to believe that there will be a delay before the beginning of any allied attacks on his forces, and he has sent intermediaries to rulers of Yemen and Syria to attempt to ensure that they will block any effort by the Arab League to participate in these attacks. He has received no answer to these requests. (Source Comment: Qaddafi believes that while the Arab League has passed a resolution supporting a no-fly zone over Libya, the member states will not actually participate in this type of operation. In this regard he is focused on current statements by officials of the United States that Arab League states must participate in any military activity.)

According to these individuals Qaddafi is furious with the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Great Britain, and France, whom he sees as his principal enemies in this matter. Qaddafi is holding out hope that the United States and Germany will not play direct roles in any action. Saif Qaddafi told advisors in confidence that he expects the French Air Force, supported by the British Air Force, to attack Libyan airfields and artillery parks in the near future, adding that French President Nicolas Sarkozy wants to destroy the Qaddafi regime before they draw additional attention to financial aid provided to his 2007 presidential campaign. Saif is encouraging his father to press the attack on Benghazi in an effort to end the rebellion before these attacks can take place. Saif also believes that propaganda is the only effective weapon Libya has against such attacks.

(Source Comment: According to knowledgeable individuals Foreign Minister Mousa Koussa was also surprised by the UN vote, and is now concerned that Qaddafi does not grasp the serious nature of the situation. He believes this vote will improve the level of confidence among the rebels, while the first allied air attacks may destroy the discipline and morale in the Libyan Army (particularly their African and Algerian Taureg mercenaries), once they realize that there is little effective defense against these sophisticated forces. That said, Mousa Koussa is committed to Qaddafi and continues to believe that the differences among the Western Allies, and a lack of organization on the part of the rebel leadership gives the Libyan leader a chance for victory, if the army can move quickly toward Benghazi. His hope is that aggressive attacks will panic the rebel forces in Benghazi, and that they will abandon the city. Under this threat, Mousa Koussa also believes that some of the tribal groups who have been working with the rebels may turn back to Qaddafi.)

During the afternoon and early evening of March 18 the Libyan Air Force launched air raids against the rebel held region of Misrata, while the army, using its heavy 155 mm motorized guns, bombarded the town. Libyan commanders reported to their headquarters in Tripoli that the town was burning, but rebel forces were continuing to resist the Army's advance. At the same time, intelligence officials have informed Saif Qaddafi that members of two of the Benghazi region's main tribes, the Tarhuna and Warfalla, expressed support for Qaddafi. They also received word that some members of these tribes had skirmished with rebel forces in the suburbs of Benghazi.

(Source Comment: There was no information on the results of these skirmishes. In addition, knowledgeable sources report that over the past week Qaddafi's forces have moved west after retaking the village of Bisher and the town of Uqayla, 12 miles from Brega. These source indicated that a limited number of rebel military units have switched back to Qaddafi's command. The tribal forces are watching the situation and could also change loyalty to Qaddafi if they believe the rebels are lost. Accordingly, the UN resolution authorizing force against Qaddafi is an important psychological victory for the rebels. The greatest challenge for the rebels continues to be the organization of a command and control structure that can pursue the fight against Qaddafi, while training the new recruits to the rebel cause. The greatest challenges for Qaddafi's forces are their extended supply lines, and fear of the impending allied attacks. Rebel commanders do not believe that Qaddafi's forces are in a position to attack the large city of Benghazi directly; however, they are concerned that if the Libyan Army does capture the city they will seek vengeance against the civilian population.)