

The bombing of Gaddafi's compound

Barry Grey
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The bombing of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's personal compound in Tripoli Sunday night epitomizes the criminal character of the war launched by the US and its allies and exposes the humanitarian pretenses of a supposedly "limited action" to protect civilians.

The cruise missile reportedly fired by a British submarine reduced a three-story building at the compound to rubble. Earlier on Sunday, British Defense Secretary Liam Fox had said that Gaddafi was a legitimate target in the massive air assault being waged by the United States, Britain and France against the virtually defenseless former colonial country.

Speaking from Germany on Monday, US Gen. Carter Ham, head of America's Africa Command and overall commander of the forces attacking Libya, denied that Gaddafi was being targeted. At the same time he defended the missile strike as part of efforts to degrade the regime's "command and control capability."

The British *Daily Mail's* web site reported Monday that MI6 spies were telephoning Gaddafi's generals, warning them that they would be targeted by missiles unless they defected.

The bombing of Gaddafi's residence highlights the brazenness with which the US-led war coalition is using the legal fig leaf of a UN Security Council resolution ostensibly authorizing a no-fly zone to indiscriminately attack both military and civilian targets. The purpose of the UN-sanctioned aggression is not to protect civilians, but to destroy Gaddafi's military infrastructure and, if possible, murder the head of state himself in order to replace his dictatorial regime with an even more pliant tool of the US, France and Britain and the Western oil conglomerates.

Once again, the United Nations has revealed itself to be nothing other than a tool of the great powers, vindicating Lenin's apt designation of its predecessor, the League of Nations, as a "thieves' kitchen."

Media dispatches say some 300 Gaddafi supporters

were in the compound at the time of the attack, although the Libyan government has not reported any casualties in the explosion.

It appears that President Barack Obama is going out of his way to claim the barbaric mantle of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, launching the war on the eighth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq and bombing Gaddafi's compound just shy of 25 years since Reagan bombed the same facility, killing 60 Libyans, including Gaddafi's adopted daughter.

For all the talk of a limited and narrowly defined intervention, the US pushed for language in the UN resolution passed last Thursday authorizing "all necessary measures" against Gaddafi's forces. This provided a green light for an all-out war.

The supposed prohibition of "occupation troops" is another fraud. British cabinet ministers and Prime Minister David Cameron are already saying that British troops could be introduced for the supposed purpose of policing the arms embargo without violating the UN resolution.

For the past decade Gaddafi has enjoyed the warmest of relations with Washington and the European capitals, having agreed to close down his nuclear facilities, collaborate in the US "war on terror" and grant lucrative oil concessions to Western firms. But he now joins a long list of one-time US imperialist assets who, despite their best efforts, fell afoul of the geostrategic aims of the American ruling elite. The list includes Panama's Noriega, Somalia's Aidid, Serbia's Milosevic and Saddam Hussein.

In the broader struggle of the US to contain and ultimately crush the revolutionary wave engulfing much of North Africa and the Middle East, Gaddafi became expendable. Washington seized on the uprising against Gaddafi based in the east of Libya, and may have had a hand in its eruption, to remove Gaddafi and fashion a new colonial-style regime from which the US

can act militarily and politically against the threat of socialist revolution, particularly in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and protect its key ally, Israel.

Even as the bombs continued to fall Monday in Tripoli and other cities and the smoking ruins of tanks and charred bodies of retreating Gaddafi troops littered the roads outside Benghazi and other towns, Obama reiterated that the goal of the bloodbath was the removal of Gaddafi. It is “still US policy that Gaddafi needs to go,” he said at a press conference in Santiago, Chile.

With typical double-talk, Obama and his counterparts in Europe seek to combine the demand for regime change with pledges to allow the Libyan people to decide their own fate. In fact, the aggression against Libya is aimed precisely at preventing the working class in the lead of the oppressed masses of Libya and the entire region from settling scores with the various bourgeois stooge regimes and breaking the stranglehold of imperialism by taking power into their own hands.

There is an additional motive behind the savagery of the attack on Libya. Washington cannot permit any leader to defy its dictates with impunity. Former Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman alluded to this on a Sunday talk show, declaring that once the US demanded his resignation Gaddafi had to go because the international prestige of the United States was on the line.

Libya is to be made an object lesson for all oppressed countries. The display of the ability of the imperialist powers to rain down death and destruction by unleashing immense firepower is aimed at intimidating the revolutionary aspirations of workers and youth throughout the region.

The violence of imperialism is fueled by the deepening economic, social and political contradictions and sharpening inter-imperialist conflicts arising from the breakdown of the global financial system three-and-a-half years ago. The aggressive role of France and Britain in the current war, the belated and hurried efforts of the US to take the lead, the opposition of Russia and Germany to the military intervention reflect the intensifying scramble among the great powers for spheres of influence and control of resources and markets in Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

Under these conditions, the entire post-World War II framework of international law has collapsed. It has

been supplanted by the reassertion of war as a legitimate tool of foreign policy, along with such practices as torture and targeted assassinations.

Contained in the new eruption of lawlessness and barbarity in Libya is the drift of capitalism toward world war. Trotsky’s words from 1938 in the founding program of the Fourth International resonate with immense relevance today: “Under the increasing tension of capitalist disintegration, imperialist antagonisms reach an impasse at the height of which separate clashes and bloody local disturbances (Ethiopia, Spain, the Far East, Central Europe) must inevitably coalesce into a conflagration of world dimensions.”

Now, as then, the only way to end war and prevent a global conflagration is to disarm the imperialists by means of the world socialist revolution.

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