US Special Forces have been operating secretly in Libya for months

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14 May 2016

Teams of United States Special Operations commandos have been active in Libya since last year, the *Washington Post* reported Thursday, citing statements from unnamed US military officers.

The American soldiers are operating from secret bases that were established last year, without any public disclosure, in eastern and western Libya, near Benghazi and Misurata. The US troops are scouting targets and recruiting proxy forces as part of "contact teams," according to the *Post*.

Members of the American military "began making visits to Libya last spring and established twin outposts six months later," military sources told the *Post*, and US personnel have been "cultivating relationships among forces that are mobilizing for a possible assault against the Islamic State in its Sirte stronghold."

On May 9, Italy's foreign ministry announced that Rome will lead talks, scheduled to begin in Vienna on Monday, aimed at shoring up commitments from a coalition of governments for a much larger NATO intervention in Libya, to include thousands of Italian ground forces.

A list of attendees for the Libyan summit has not been forthcoming, but Tunisia's foreign minister assured media that "regional foreign ministers and other important figures will be there."

The war preparations are being justified behind the lying slogan of "support for the unity government" and its "war against the Islamic State."

In reality, the imperialist powers are seeking a fig leaf of legality for predatory operations aimed at securing various neocolonial interests and ambitions within the shattered country, which has descended into chaos and fratricidal violence since being destroyed by the 2011 NATO war to topple the government of Muammar Gaddafi.

The claims of the US and European governments to be intervening for the purpose of combating ISIS is especially cynical. The 2011 smashing of Libya was carried out with the support of the same Islamist extremist militias that are now identified as the mortal enemy. These elements were mobilized first on behalf of the war first against Gaddafi, and then against the Assad regime in Syria. US-backed proxy forces were massed and equipped in Libya as part of covert operations overseen from the US CIA station in Benghazi.

The revelation that US forces have been engaged in Libya for months comes just days after reports surfaced that American ground forces were secretly deployed to southern Yemen two weeks ago. Both operations have been launched without even a facade of public discussion or democratic process, and acknowledged only after the fact, through anonymous leaks to the media.

Behind a thick curtain of secrecy, the Obama administration and the Pentagon are expanding global US militarism and war-making, encompassing ever greater areas of Africa and Eurasia.

President Obama has presided over an explosive growth of US neocolonial garrisons and outposts stretching from Libya to the Congo and from Somalia to Senegal, bound together by a "hippo trench" of logistics hubs, bases and infrastructure that snakes through no less than 12 nominally sovereign African territories.

According to former US Defense Department Special Operations Senior Officer William Wechsler, the US operations in Libya, which were revealed publicly for the first time Thursday, are only one example of a growing number of undeclared US interventions and wars in countries referred to in the internal jargon of the

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Obama administration as “areas outside of active hostilities.”

In Libya and through growing areas of West, Central and Northern Africa, US military and intelligence units are “mapping local networks both friendly and unfriendly,” Wechsler said.

US military leaders speak openly in leading journals about a looming expansion of US-led commando wars throughout West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin.

US General Bolduc recently described the countries surrounding Lake Chad as “ground zero for the Islamic State in Africa.”

In April, US military officials warned that ISIS was deepening its relations with Boko Haram, the northeastern Nigeria-based Islamist faction that has served as the central pretext for the Pentagon’s buildup of US forces in and around Nigeria, now the continent’s leading oil producer and an economic powerhouse.

In the past year, Washington has orchestrated a proxy invasion of Nigeria, led by the Chadian and Cameroonian militaries. These forces are backed by US advisors and increasingly armed with high-tech US weapons. This is part of a steadily increasing US buildup that includes hundreds of US and NATO troops, some $200 million funds to train security forces in a handful of Central African states and $50 million for the construction of a drone base in Agadez, Niger.

American soldiers and intelligence personnel are active in every single country in Africa, and military contingents have been deployed to a laundry list of countries, including Somalia, Uganda, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Mali and Burkina Faso.

The US military presence is complemented by deepening collaboration with the most reactionary dictatorships on the continent. The Obama administration has provided political leadership for the escalation, working to install the pro-imperialist former dictator Muhammadu Buhari in power in Nigeria and deepening ties with Chadian dictator President Idriss Deby, who received a personal visit from US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power last month.

The new carve-up of Africa is part of a general process through which the former colonial countries are being restored to conditions of near-direct rule by imperialist militaries, in league with far-right, openly pro-imperialist military dictatorships and satraps at the local level.

The original US-NATO war against Libya was planned as a means to “kick in the door” for the new imperialist redivision of Africa and open the way for a huge expansion of Western military operations stretching into the southern reaches of the continent. In the aftermath of the 2011 war, the Sahara and Sub-Saharan regions have been flooded with mercenaries and weaponry, closely followed by imperialist armies, which invaded Mali in a French-led intervention less than two years after the start of the Libyan war.

Thousands of French troops have subsequently established a permanent presence in the Sahel region.

There can be little doubt that the plans being hatched in Vienna next week will involve further bloody depredations against Libya and the entire continent, to be carried out by the US and European militaries and intelligence services.

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