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Small Steps Towards Progress in Libya

By Nancy LeTourneau

Mi piace 2



If you're like me, your knowledge of what's been happening in Libya is limited to the fact that the country is in chaos. But that's not simply because of the involvement of terrorist groups like al Qaeda and ISIS. [Qatar and the United Arab Emirates](#) have been fighting a proxy war in that country.

The Qatar-backed, Islamist-aligned Tripoli government controls most of western Libya, while the UAE-linked, internationally recognized Tobruk government dominates the east...

Qatar and its ally, the Islamist government of Turkey, have proved willing to back Islamist groups throughout the Muslim world in the wake of the Arab Spring. The UAE and its ally, Egypt, which often equate political Islam with extremism, have gone so far as to intervene directly to undermine Islamists, launching air strikes within Libya.

Apparently, President Obama put this issue on the table back in May when he hosted the Gulf States Summit at Camp David.

Obama was the first to bring up the Gulf states' proxy war at the Camp David summit, according to a senior Gulf diplomat present at the meeting. "The president said people from this table are supporting each side in Libya," the diplomat told HuffPost. Obama emphasized that he would like to see an "inclusive" political solution — implying he was unwilling to allow the UAE-backed Tobruk government to dominate other actors, specifically the Qatar-backed Islamists in Tripoli. The president's comment prompted Qatar's ruler,

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, to appeal to the top official present from the UAE, Crown Prince Muhammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to agree to a political solution, according to the diplomat.

That is actually a pretty bold move by President Obama. He essentially said that he wasn't willing to let the internationally-recognized government backed by UAE and Egypt dominate the Islamist government that is backed by Qatar and Turkey.

This is pretty similar to the President's refusal to take sides in countries like Iraq and Syria on the ancient battle between Sunni and Shia Muslims. He consistently advocates for political solutions that are inclusive.

The result is that the two sides in Libya are at least talking.

The Gulf diplomat present at the meeting, who is familiar with the past few years of Qatari and UAE involvement in Libya, called that commitment a first-of-its-kind agreement. It is understood to have paved the way for the current talks, particularly because the two Gulf states agreed not to criticize the peace process publicly.

Tuareg and Tebu fight proxy battle in southwest Libya

22 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



Fierce fighting between indigenous Tuareg and Tebu tribes in the isolated Saharan town of Ubari, near Libya's lucrative southern oil fields and vast frontier with Algeria, Niger, and Chad, has entered its 10th bloody month.

The oasis, once a draw for tourists crossing kilometres of spectacular desert dunes, is now the site of a vicious proxy battle between outside powers vying to divide local tribes and rule the remote mineral-rich and politically volatile area.

"We want peace and we want Libya to prosper," said Tahar Wafalla, a Tuareg leader in his mid-30s who mans a nightly watch of volunteer fighters in Ubari's outskirts. They all said they brought their own weapons and ammunition to the battle.

Since September, the conflict has claimed hundreds of lives and displaced most of the region's Tuareg and Arab families, as well as the Tebu minority. Businesses and homes in the town, which had a pre-war population of 35,000, have been destroyed, and the one road leading through Ubari has been held hostage by the fight.

The Tuareg fighters talk softly and laugh while they cook their evening meal over a bonfire, after an exhausting day of violent skirmishes with Tebu snipers in Ubari's devastated downtown, and mortar fire on the nearby strategic Tendi mountaintop. They tense up when vehicles approach over sandy tracks in the dark, and strain to hear distant gunfire.

They have been guarding Ubari's residents against Tebu fighters, said Wafalla, who is from the remote Tuareg town of Ghat, nearly 300km southwest along a narrow, decrepit road skirting the picturesque Acacus mountain range towards Algeria's border.

Former dictator Muammar Gaddafi heavily recruited from Ghat for his army and intelligence services, promising the Tuareg – who are stretched across borders into Algeria, Niger and Mali – a Libyan sanctuary, jobs and rights. But many Tuareg still await their promised Libyan ID cards, access to a quality education, and an escape from the poorly paid security sector or hard-scrabble life of smuggling.

Tuareg youth have been hit hardest, impoverished and hemmed in by Libya's violent chaos and skyrocketing unemployment. Like members of the Tebu tribe, who live mostly between the southern towns of Murzuq and Kufra, as well as in neighbouring Chad, many Tuareg have little economic alternative but to use their innate knowledge of the desert to transport a cross-border cargo of people, subsidised gasoline, drugs, and guns.

Mohammed, 28, wears a baseball hat, black T-shirt and gold chains as he hawks black market gasoline in jerry cans by a dusty football pitch in Ghat to customers desperate for fuel. Gas stations are often closed around the southern city of Sebha, mostly due to corruption, and the one road from there to Ghat is blocked at Ubari by Tebu snipers.

Mohammed buys gas in Ubari from traders and shuttles it to Ghat, marking up the price by one-third, to 300 Libyan dinars (\$220) for a full tank.

“There are no jobs and the quality of life is bad,” Mohammed told Al Jazeera, noting many of the young men here smoke hash and smuggle drugs, migrants, and guns.

“We smuggle because we know the desert, even though the French are there,” Mohammed said. He laughed when asked about the lack of roads. “We use the stars, not GPS.”

Although many Tuareg soldiers remained loyal until Gaddafi was toppled in 2011, the Tebu tribe sided with the revolutionaries hoping for a better life. So did Tuareg men like Wafalla, who, under Tuareg leader Abu Baker Issa – recently killed in a Tebu ambush in Ubari – formed a revolutionary unit to safeguard Tuareg territory in the southwest.

In Wadi Meggedet, looming volcanic pinnacles jut out of a remote sandy moonscape near the Algerian border, hours off road from Ghat's asphalt highway. A group of young Tuareg students, border guards and musicians travel here often to sit under the stars, drink tea, eat and play the guitar and drums.

Mojahad, 37, like Wafalla, said he defected to join Issa's revolutionary forces securing the borders. But he and his colleagues have not been paid their government salaries for three months, he said, and they have few patrol cars and weapons.

Recently, many smuggling paths have shifted away from Tuareg territory in the southwest to the border due south of Sebha, under Tebu control and French surveillance.

Libya's duelling governments have backed armed groups across the country fighting over oil assets and infrastructure. They have thrown support to opposing forces in the Ubari fight, but both the Tuareg and Tebu

say while it is enough to sustain the fighting, it is not enough to win.

Misratan forces, who are based in Sebha and, alongside the Tuareg, guard Libya's second-largest oil field at Sharara, are a key power in the Tripoli-based Libya Dawn government. Misrata provides medical aid and gasoline to Tuareg fighters, while Tripoli's defence ministry is said to provide some financial backing.

The internationally recognised Dignity government, based in Tobruk and Beida, along with General Khalifa Haftar's force, have the United Arab Emirates and Egypt as large supporters and back the Tebu. While the Tebu have largely aligned with the Dignity government, the Tuareg community is split between the two governments.

However, all Tuareg residents, who spoke with Al Jazeera, said they were united in defending their homes in Ubari, noting loyalty to their tribe trumps politics.

Meanwhile, the United States and European Union have [expressed concern](#) about the growing threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the north. There are also fears the group could take root in the chaotic south. They have been scrambling for solutions to stem the tide of thousands of African migrants and asylum seekers traversing the desert en route to Europe. Many Tuareg are sceptical of a [recent ceasefire](#) brokered in Ubari, the latest in a series of ineffectual agreements for what they now consider a proxy war.

The Tuareg, who have a history of conflict with France in north Africa, are suspicious of French military and economic aspirations in the area. There is a French military base 100km into Niger from the Libyan border, as well as a US military presence.

Meanwhile, Algeria has bolstered its border security to control spillover violence from Libya, effectively cutting off the Libyan Tuareg from their Algerian kin.

Additionally, some Tuareg believe that powerful Libyan government interests are pitting the south's indigenous tribes against each other to control the area's lucrative oil fields and border trade.

"There were so many *katibas* [armed groups] in Ubari to defend the tribes before the fighting, and we told them that this was wrong, that they should be accountable to the government," said Yahya Ibrahim, a Tuareg school teacher in Ubari. He was forced to flee with his family to Ghat when his home on the front-line was burned down.

"I think Libyans can govern themselves, but the problem is from the outside," he said. "If this was purely Libyan, we could solve the problem between ourselves."

EU Commission Unimpressed By Russia's Pipeline Offensive

By **EurActiv**

(**EurActiv**) — Russia and Greece signed a deal Friday for a section of the Turkish Stream pipeline across Greece, and Gazprom announced plans to build two additional stretches to the Nord Stream gas pipeline.

But the Commission said more Russian gas was not needed, and that it would thoroughly scrutinise the new projects for compliance with EU rules.



European Union Commission

EurActiv June 21, 2015 1, Business No Comments

The visit of Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to

Russia today has brought about the signature of a memorandum for the construction of a section across Greece of the so-called Turkish Stream, or TurkStream pipeline, names the authorities in Athens dislike.

The deal was signed between Russia and Greece's energy ministers, Alexander Novak, and Panagiotis Lafazanis, for a pipeline with a capacity of 47 billion cubic meters a year (bcm/y).

Construction of the Greek section of the Turkish Stream pipeline will start in 2016 and be completed by 2019. The two countries will have equal shares in the company, Novak was quoted by RT as stating at the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg on Friday.

Novak said Russia will initially finance the construction of the pipeline, according to Sputnik.

“Our meeting today is a historical meeting... The memorandum expresses the readiness of

both sides to bring the south direction of the pipeline to implementation,” Lafazanis reportedly said.

In addition, Gazprom announced that it would build two additional stretches to the Nord Sea pipeline to Germany under the Baltic, with a trio of Western energy companies.

“Since the commissioning of Nord Stream pipeline, Gazprom has been investigating potential extension of this export route. Now we are going to proceed with the implementation of this project together with our partners,” Gazprom Chief Executive Alexei Miller said in a statement.

Gazprom’s partners in the Nord Stream, a major gas supply artery feeding into western Europe, are Anglo-Dutch Shell, Germany’s E.ON, and Austria’s OMV.

Gazprom would own 51% in the project to build stage 3 and 4 of Nord Stream, with capacity of 55 bcm/y, Gazprom spokesman Sergei Kupriyanov said on the sidelines of the St Petersburg meeting.

Russia’s goal is to find new ways to deliver gas to Europe bypassing conflict-stricken Ukraine, and using the pipeline projects to increase its influence in friendly countries such as Greece, Serbia, and Hungary.

Commission reaction

EurActiv asked the European Commission to comment on Russia’s plans. This is the written answer received:

“The European Commission takes note of the announcement by Gazprom, together with OMV, Shell and E.ON, to consider building two further stretches of NordStream pipeline, with an additional capacity of 55 bcm per annum. Furthermore, Gazprom had announced in January 2015 that it would build the Turkstream project, which in addition to a pipeline serving Turkey would include a capacity of 47 bcm to Europe, via Turkey.

“Energy security remains a key priority for the Energy Union. As stated in the Energy Union framework strategy, energy diversification is crucial for ensuring secure and resilient energy supplies to EU citizens and companies. In this context, the European Union is particularly committed to diversification of gas suppliers (countries), counterparties (companies) and routes.

“To ensure this objective, the Commission aims at more interconnected and competitive gas markets in Europe, with projects such as the Southern Gas Corridor, the establishment of liquid gas hubs in the Mediterranean area and LNG being in the centre of this strategy. It

should be recalled that work to that effect is also being carried out among others in the framework of CESEC High Level Group and EU LNG and storage strategies.

“The EU is currently importing about one third of its gas from Russia, about half of which currently transits Ukraine. While European domestic production is expected to decrease in the coming decade, existing capacity from Russia is currently only used at around 57%. This shows that current transport routes from Russia to the EU, including through Ukraine, already well exceed the EU’s needs for existing and likely future supplies of pipeline gas from Russia to the EU.

“The European Commission recalls that new pipelines must be built in full compliance with EU legislation and the will be vigilant about the rigorous application of EU law notably in the field of energy, internal market and competition.

“Finally, the European Commission reiterates its position that Ukraine has been a major reliable transit country and provides an economic route for supplies to Europe. In this context, the EU actively supports the efforts of the Ukrainian Government and Naftogas to ensure that this remains the case, in particular the reforms that Ukraine is currently undertaking to ensure full compliance with the EU acquis it has committed to as a member of the Energy Community. The EU therefore believes that it is in the interest of all parties that Ukraine remains an important transit country.”

Jihadi John could have fled Syria after being sidelined by Isis

Dave Burke for Metro.co.uk
Sunday 21 Jun 2015 4:28 pm

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Mohammed Emwazi was revealed to be Isis killer Jihadi John in February

Isis executioner Jihadi John has fled to Libya after being sidelined by the terrorist group, according to reports.

The Londoner, revealed in February to be 26-year-old Mohammed Emwazi, is thought to have escaped Syria after his identity was made public.

A source within the US-led Joint Terrorism Taskforce told the **Sunday Express**: 'We think it is a tactical move by Isis to keep Emwazi out of the limelight.'

'His unmasking by the press took away the mystery surrounding his bogey man persona and though we have targeted him with conventional missiles we have had no confirmation of a successful strike.'

MORE: [Jihadi John's home is about to go up for rent](#)



Emwazi appeared in Isis videos of hostage murders (Picture: Rex)

Emwazi was filmed talking in a British accent in Isis propaganda videos before the executions of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, British aid worker David Haines and Brit Alan Henning, who were all beheaded.

He was given the nickname Jihadi John by hostages because he was part of a terrorist cell with four members who were referred to as 'The Beatles'.

The Sunday Express also reports that Emwazi has been in touch with a terrorist cell in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire.

Somalia bombs al-Shabaab from the air for first time

22 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



Somalia on Monday bombed positions of the Islamist terrorist group al-Shabaab from the air for the first time, killing a senior commander and several other people, security officials said.

The attack targeted the southern town of Bardheere, a key al-Shabaab base. Bombs hit a location where al-Shabaab members were meeting, as well as a nearby police station.

Those killed included senior al-Shabaab commander Yusuf Hagi, said an intelligence officer who asked not to be named.

The bombing was in retaliation for a foiled attack on a compound of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) in Mogadishu on Sunday, security officials said.

A senior al-Shabaab official declined to comment.

The Somali army, which is being rebuilt as the country gradually recovers from two decades of clan warfare, does not yet have bomber planes.

The attack was carried out by Somalia's US-trained counter-terrorism unit, NISA spokesman Mohamed Yusuf Osman said.

Analysts said the war planes may have been supplied by the United States, which has previously used its drones to fight al-Shabaab in Somalia.

Interpol and social media companies to target Islamic State propaganda accounts in Europe

22 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



Europol director Rob Wainwright has revealed that the agency is to initiate Europe wide tracking of social media accounts and messages used as propaganda tools by Islamic State (IS).

Up to 100,000 messages a day, released by around 50,000 social media accounts linked to the jihadists, are aimed at promoting the ideals of IS and recruiting fighters and brides to move to the areas of Iraq and Syria that make up the 'caliphate'.

Wainwright said that by tracking the accounts, not only will Interpol be able to identify those issuing the messages, but also those being targeted.

"Who is it reaching out to young people, in particular, by social media, to get them to come, in the first place? It's very difficult because of the dynamic nature of social media."

Due to the size of the task, the unit will use network analytics to identify where the most regular traffic is emanating from and will listen in to chatter in commonly used websites. The project is based on a similar task force established by Scotland Yard in London, and is expected to chase sources of funding as well.

The British Home Secretary Theresa May revealed the UK support for the initiative last week,

"We have also supported the EU in setting up an internet-referral unit at Europol to address the increasing amount of terrorist and extremist propaganda available on the internet, and I am pleased to say the UK will be seconding a police officer to this unit."

EU prepares 5 ships, 2 subs for anti-smuggler mission in Mediterranean

22 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



EU foreign ministers agreed earlier on Monday to launch a naval mission to combat gangs of human traffickers who transport scores of migrants from Libya to European coasts.

According to the source, who wished to remain anonymous, about a thousand people will be engaged in the operation, which is set to reach full capacity within a month.

The naval mission aims to collect information on smugglers while remaining in international waters, its vessels will not enter Libya's territorial waters, the source said.

The source added that the European Union would cooperate with NATO, as well as with the UN Refugee Agency, the African Union, the Arab League and other international organizations. The EU mission, called the EUNAVFOR Med operation, foresees the seizure of ships trafficking undocumented migrants from North Africa across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe as well as the prosecution of the ships' captains.

The initiative was unveiled by EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini in May. However, the mission was launched without UN Security Council approval.

ISIS opens a new front on Europe's doorstep: Chechan jihadi group with 'up to 15,000' fighters pledge allegiance to terror horde

22 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



ISIS has spread its tentacles further around Europe after a major terrorist group which commands 'as many as 15,000' in the Caucasus region of southern Russia pledged its allegiance to it.

The leader of the Caucasus Emirate, which has carried out over 900 terrorist attacks on Russian soil since its formation in 2007, personally declared his loyalty to ISIS commander-in-chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

'We need to hurry up and unite so we can cut off the heads of the infidels,' Aslan Byutukayev says in a new propaganda video allegedly filmed inside the predominantly Muslim republic of Chechnya.

The Caucasus Emirate serves as an umbrella group of smaller extremist groups in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia, who have been waging bloody battles in an attempt to break away from Russian rule for decades.

The group may command tens of thousands of loyal subjects, according to Professor Gordon Hahn of the Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program.

'The entire CE [Caucasus Emirate] insurgency and terrorist movement may be estimated to number some 15,200 soldiers, leaders and facilitators,' he wrote in his book *The Caucasus Emirate Mujahedin*.

Islamic State already commands 'up to 200,000' fighters according to Kurdish commanders and as many as eight million people are thought to be living under its brutal reign across the Middle East and North Africa – after it expanded its territory to Libya earlier this year.

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And in a recently released video entitled 'Soon, Soon', an unknown organisation called 'ISIS Tunisia Province' hinted at setting up yet another official base in the north African country which has supplied the extremists with 3,000 jihadi soldiers in recent years.

Caucases Emirate was recognised as a terrorist organisation by the UK, United States, Russia and the United Nations following a series of deadly high-profile attacks between 2009 and 2014.

The Islamist group was behind the 2009 Nevsky Express disaster when 27 people were killed and over 50 wounded when a bomb was detonated on a high speed train carrying 661 passengers from Moscow St Petersburg.

It also claimed responsibility for two separate suicide bomb attacks on trams in the Russian city of Volgograd which killed 34 in December 2013.

Its fighters were among over 400 Chechen extremists who joined Islamic State on the battlefield in Syria and Iraq since 2011, according to the Russian Interior Ministry.

And Chechen fighters such as Islamic State's military commander Omar Al-Shishani and Muslem Al-Shishani have taken a prominent role in guiding the terror group to victory throughout the Middle East.

In October 2014, after conquering Mosul, the man known as Omar the Chechen said he would take 'revenge' on Russia.

[Bloomberg](#) reported how Omar al-Shishani phoned his father in Georgia to tell him ISIS will someday wage war on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

'He said 'don't worry dad, I'll come home and show the Russians... I have many thousands following me now and I'll get more. We'll have our revenge against Russia,' his father Temur Batirashvili said.

The number of Chechen fighters currently in Syria and Iraq range from 200 to 1,000 and there are growing concerns they are being told to return to their home countries to continue to wage jihad, according to the Independent.

Earlier this month, worrying images emerged on social media which showed extremists holding up 'love letters' to Islamic State's leader inside Chechnya.

One handwritten message held outside the Akhmad Kadyrov mosque in the capital Grozny read: 'Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, this town awaits your holy army!'

That picture, which was seen by experts as a direct threat to the Kremlin-backed Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, was followed by another featuring a masked fighter who held up a sign reportedly saying: 'I swear by Allah, we are waiting for you in Chechnya!'

Although Baghdadi did not reply directly, ISIS terrorists recognised the messages and replied on social media, : 'Be patient, o brothers and sisters... The day is not far off when the banner of Islam will hang and Shari'a law will be on the streets.

'Heads will fly from those who tear off the hijabs of the sisters and pluck the beards of the brothers.'