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On March 19, military forces from the United States, France and Great Britain began to enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, which called for the establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya and authorized the countries involved in enforcing the zone to "take all necessary measures" to protect civilians and "civilian-populated areas under threat of attack." Obviously, such military operations cannot be imposed against the will of a hostile nation without first removing the country's ability to interfere with the no-fly zone — and removing this ability to resist requires strikes against military command-and-control centers, surface-to-air missile installations and military airfields. This means that the no-fly zone not only was a defensive measure to protect the rebels — it also required an attack upon the government of Libya.

Certainly, Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi has no doubt that the U.S. and European military operations against the Libyan military targets are attacks against his regime. He has specifically warned France and the United Kingdom that they would come to regret the intervention. Now, such threats could be construed to mean that should Gadhafi survive, he will seek to cut off the countries' access to Libyan energy resources in the future. However, given Libya's past use of terrorist strikes to lash out when attacked by Western powers, Gadhafi's threats certainly raise the possibility that, desperate and hurting, he will once again return to terrorism as a means to seek retribution for the attacks against his regime. While threats of sanctions and retaliation have tempered Gadhafi's use of terrorism in recent years, his fear may evaporate if he comes to believe he has nothing to lose.

History of Libyan Reactions

Throughout the early 1980s, the U.S. Navy contested Libya's claim to the Gulf of Sidra and said the gulf was international water. This resulted in several minor skirmishes, such as the incident in August 1981 when U.S. Navy fighters downed two Libyan aircraft. Perhaps the most costly of these skirmishes for Libya occurred in March 1986, when a U.S. task force sank two Libyan ships and attacked a number of Libyan surface-to-air missile sites that had launched missiles at U.S. warplanes.

The Libyans were enraged by the 1986 incident, but as the incident highlighted, they lacked the means to respond militarily due to the overwhelming superiority of U.S. forces. This prompted the Libyans to employ other means to seek revenge. Gadhafi had long seen himself as the successor to Gamal Abdel Nasser as the leader of Arab nationalism and sought to assert himself in a number of ways. Lacking the population and military of Egypt, or the finances of Saudi Arabia, he began to use terrorism and the support of terrorist groups as a way to undermine his rivals for power in the Arab world. Later, when he had been soundly rejected by the Arab world, he began to turn his attention to Africa, where he employed these same tools. They could also be used against what Gadhafi viewed as imperial powers.

On April 2, 1986, a bomb tore a hole in the side of TWA Flight 840 as it was flying from Rome to Athens. The explosion killed four American passengers and injured several others. The attack was claimed by the Arab Revolutionary Cells but is believed to have been carried out by the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO), one of the Marxist terrorist groups heavily sponsored by Libya.

On the evening of April 5, 1986, a bomb detonated in the La Belle disco in Berlin. Two U.S. soldiers and one civilian were killed in the blast and some 200 others were injured. Communications between Tripoli and the Libyan People's Bureau (its embassy) in East Berlin were intercepted by the United States, which, armed with this smoking gun tying Libya to the La Belle attack, launched a retaliatory attack on Libya the night of April 15, 1986, that included a strike against Gadhafi's residential compound and military headquarters at Bab Al Azizia, south of Tripoli. The strike narrowly missed killing Gadhafi, who had been warned of the impending attack. The warning was reportedly provided by either a Maltese or Italian politician, depending on which version of the story one hears.

The Libyan government later claimed that the attack killed Gadhafi's young daughter, but this was pure propaganda. It did, however, anger and humiliate Gadhafi, though he lacked the ability to respond militarily. In the wake of the attack on his compound, Gadhafi feared additional reprisals and began to exercise his terrorist hand far more carefully and in a manner to provide at least some degree of deniability. One way he did this was by using proxy groups to conduct his strikes, such as the ANO and the Japanese Red Army (JRA). It did not take Gadhafi's forces long to respond. On the very night of the April 15 U.S. attack, U.S. Embassy communications officer William Calkins was shot and critically wounded in Khartoum, Sudan, by a Libyan revolutionary surrogate in Sudan. On April 25, Arthur Pollock, a communicator at the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, was also shot and seriously wounded by an ANO gunman.

In May 1986, the JRA attacked the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, with an improvised mortar that caused little damage, and the JRA conducted similar ineffective attacks against the U.S. Embassy in Madrid in February and April of 1987. In June 1987, JRA operatives attacked the U.S. Embassy in Rome using vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and an improvised mortar. In April 1988, the group attacked the USO club in Naples. JRA bombmaker Yu Kikumura was arrested on the New Jersey Turnpike in April 1988 while en route to New York City to conduct a bombing attack there. The use of ANO and JRA surrogates provided Gadhafi with some plausible deniability for these attacks, but there is little doubt that he was behind them. Then on Dec. 21, 1988, Libyan agents operating in Malta succeeded in placing a bomb aboard Pan Am Flight 103, which was destroyed in the air over Scotland. All 259 passengers and crew members aboard that flight died, as did 11 residents of Lockerbie, Scotland, the town where the remnants of the Boeing 747 jumbo jet fell. Had the jet exploded over the North Atlantic as intended instead of over Scotland, the evidence that implicated Libya in the attack most likely never would have been found.

But the United States has not been the only target of Libyan terrorism. While the Libyans were busy claiming the Gulf of Sidra during the 1980s, they were also quite involved in propagating a number of coups and civil wars in Africa. One civil war in which they became quite involved was in neighboring Chad. During their military intervention there, the Libyans suffered heavy losses and eventually defeat due to French intervention on the side of the Chadian government. Not

having the military might to respond to France militarily, Gadhafi once again chose the veiled terrorist hand. On Sept. 19, 1989, UTA Flight 772 exploded shortly after taking off from N'Djamena, Chad, en route to Paris. All 156 passengers and 14 crew members were killed by the explosion. The French government investigation into the crash found that the aircraft went down as a result of a bombing and that the bomb had been placed aboard the aircraft in Brazzaville, the Republic of the Congo, by Congolese rebels working with the Libyan People's Bureau there. Six Libyans were tried in absentia and convicted for their part in the attack.

The Current Situation

Today Libya finds itself once again being attacked by an opponent with an overwhelmingly powerful military that Gadhafi's forces cannot stand up to. While Gadhafi did take responsibility for some of Libya's past terrorist attacks and publicly renounced terrorism in 2003, this step was a purely pragmatic move on his part. It was not the result of some ideological epiphany that suddenly caused Gadhafi to become a kinder and gentler guy. From the late 1980s to the renunciation of terrorism in 2003, Gadhafi retained the capability to continue using terrorism as a foreign policy tool but simply chose not to. And this capability remains in his tool box.

Unlike his views of past crises, Gadhafi sees the current attacks against him as being far more dangerous to the survival of his regime than the Gulf of Sidra skirmishes or the French military operations in Chad. Gadhafi has always been quite cold and calculating. He has not hesitated to use violence against those who have affronted him, even his own people. Now he is cornered and fearful for his very survival. Because of this, there is a very real possibility that the Libyans will employ terrorism against the members of the coalition now implementing and enforcing the no-fly zone.

Gadhafi has a long history of using diplomatic staff, which the Libyans refer to as "revolutionary committees," to conduct all sorts of skullduggery, from planning terrorist attacks to fomenting coups. Indeed, these diplomats have often served as agents for spreading Gadhafi's revolutionary principles elsewhere. Because of this history, coalition members will almost certainly be carefully monitoring the activities of Libyan diplomats within their countries — and elsewhere.

As illustrated by most of the above-mentioned terrorist attacks launched or commissioned by the Libyans, they have frequently conducted attacks against their targeted country in a third country. This process of monitoring Libyan diplomats will be greatly aided by the defection of a large number of diplomats in a variety of countries who undoubtedly have been thoroughly debriefed by security agencies looking for any hints that Gadhafi is looking to resume his practice of terrorism. These defectors will also prove helpful in identifying intelligence officers still loyal to Gadhafi and perhaps even in locating Libyan intelligence officers working under non-official cover.

But diplomats are not the only source Gadhafi can tap for assistance. As noted above, Gadhafi has a long history of using proxies to conduct terrorist attacks. Using a proxy provides Gadhafi with the plausible deniability he requires to continue to spin his story to the world that he is an innocent victim of senseless aggression. Perhaps more important, hiding his hand can also help

prevent reprisal attacks. While most of the 1980s-era Marxist proxy groups the Libyans worked with are defunct, Gadhafi does have other options.

One option is to reach out to regional jihadist groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), while another is to cultivate already improving relationships with jihadists groups in Libya such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). Indeed, Gadhafi has released hundreds of LFIG members from prison, a process that continued even after the unrest began in February. It is doubtful that the LIFG really feels any affinity for Gadhafi — the group launched an insurgency against his regime in the mid-1990s and actually tried to assassinate him — but it could be used to funnel funds and weapons to regional groups like AQIM. Such groups certainly have no love for the French, Americans or British and might be willing to conduct attacks against their interests in exchange for weapons and funding from Libya. AQIM is desperate for resources and has been involved in kidnapping for ransom and drug smuggling to raise funds to continue its struggle. This need might help it overcome its disdain for Gadhafi.

In the long run groups like AQIM and LIFG certainly would pose a threat to Gadhafi, but facing the very real existential threat from the overwhelming military force now being arrayed against him, Gadhafi may view the jihadist threat as far less pressing and severe.

Other potential agents for Libyan terrorist attacks are the various African rebel and revolutionary groups Gadhafi has maintained contact with and even supported over the years. Many of the mercenaries that have reportedly fought on the side of the Libyan loyalist forces have come from such groups. It is not out of the realm of possibility that Gadhafi could call upon such allies to attack French, British, Italian or American interests in his allies' respective countries. Such actors would have ready access to weapons (likely furnished by Libya to begin with), and the capabilities of host-country security services are quite limited in many African states. This would make them ideal places to conduct terrorist attacks. However, due to the limited capabilities exhibited by such groups, they would likely require direct Libyan oversight and guidance (the kind of direct Libyan guidance for African rebels demonstrated in the UTA Flight 772 bombing) if they were to conduct attacks against hardened targets in Africa such as foreign embassies.

Also, as seen in the wake of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's Christmas Day bomb plot in 2009, which originated in Ghana, passenger and cargo screening at African airports is not as stringent as it is elsewhere. When combined with Libya's history of attacking aircraft, and placing bombs aboard foreign aircraft in third countries, the possibility of such an attack must surely be of grave concern for Western security officials.

Terrorism, however, has its limitations, as shown by Gadhafi's activities in the 1980s. While the Libyans were able to launch several successful terrorist strikes, kill hundreds of people and traumatize many more through terror multipliers like the media, they were not able to cause any sort of lasting impact on the foreign policies of the United States or France. The attacks only served to harden the resolve of those countries to impose their will on Gadhafi, and he eventually capitulated and renounced terrorism. Those Libyan-sponsored attacks in the 1980s are also an important factor governing the way the world views Gadhafi — and today they may be playing a large part in the decision made by countries like France that Gadhafi must go. Of course, it is also this attitude — that Gadhafi must be forced out — that could lead him to

believe he has nothing to lose by playing the terrorism card once again.

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