

# Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR Protection of Civilians and Civilian-Populated Areas

June 2011

On 31 March 2011, NATO took overall command of international military operations over Libya under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. The aim of NATO's actions is to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas from attack or the threat of attack.

The mission complements the NATO-led No-Fly-Zone which closes Libya's airspace to all flights except humanitarian ones and thereby prevents any aircraft from attacking civilians. On 1 June 2011, NATO and its partners agreed to extend both aspects of the mission for another 90 days starting 27 June 2011.

The overall operation is commanded by Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard of Combined Joint Task Force Unified Protector. Air operations are managed from NATO's Air Command Headquarters for Southern Europe, in Izmir, Turkey. Real-time tactical control is exercised by NATO's Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) in Poggio Renatico, in Northern Italy. Naval operations in support of the mission are directed from NATO Maritime Command Naples.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 mandates "all necessary measures" to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under attack or threat of attack. In line with this authorisation, NATO conducts reconnaissance, surveillance and information-gathering operations to identify those forces which present a threat to civilians and civilian-populated areas.

NATO air and maritime assets can then engage targets on the ground, at sea or in the air. Military capabilities involved in this operation include fighter aircraft, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, air-to-air refuellers, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and attack helicopters. As at 31 May 2011, NATO and partner aircraft conducted over 9,000 sorties, including over 3,400 strike sorties. Ships and submarines policing the arms embargo contribute to the mission on a case-by-case basis.

Targeting depends on the decisions of operational commanders. Targets struck to date have included tanks, armoured personnel carriers, air-defence systems and artillery around and approaching key civilian areas including Misrata, Ajdabiyah and Zintan. In Tripoli, NATO has struck military command and control centres to paralyse the Qadhafi regime's ability to give orders to his forces. In its targeting, NATO makes every effort to prevent harm to the civilian population and is always guided by the principle of using the minimum necessary force.

NATO does all it can to facilitate the delivery of aid. As shown in Misrata where pro-Qadhafi forces placed mines into the harbour, NATO ships swept the area to ensure humanitarian aid can again reach those in need of assistance.

NATO does not have forces on the ground, in full compliance with UNSCR 1973 provision forbidding any foreign occupation force in Libya.

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