

Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR Protection of Civilians and Civilian-Populated Areas & Enforcement of the No-Fly Zone

October 2011



Mission: On 31 March 2011, NATO took overall command of international military operations over Libya. 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 21 September 2011, NATO and its partners agreed to extend both elements of the mission for up to 90 days starting 28 September 2011.

Mandate: Operation Unified Protector is mandated under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter. UN Security Council Resolutions 1970, 1973 and 2009 relate to NATO's mission. UNSCR 1973 mandates "all necessary measures" to protect civilians and civilian-population areas under attack or threat of attack in Libya.

Command & Control: The overall operation is commanded by Canadian 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.

Participating Nations: As at 26 September, sixteen countries (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States) have provided air assets and flown sorties in support to the operation. This effort is complemented by NATO-owned AWACS surveillance and reconnaissance planes.

Military capabilities involved in this operation include fighter aircraft, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, air-to-air refuellers, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and attack helicopters. At its peak, over 260 air assets contributed to the operation. As at 20 September 2011, around 8,000 troops were assigned to NATO to support the mission.

Action: In line with UNSCR 1973, NATO conducts reconnaissance, surveillance and information-gathering operations to identify those forces which present a threat to civilians. NATO air assets can then engage targets on the ground, at sea or in the air. Ships and submarines policing the arms embargo contribute to the mission on a case-by-case basis.

Targeting: As of 25 September 2011, NATO and partner aircraft conducted over 24,200 sorties, including over 9,000 strike sorties. NATO actions have destroyed over 5,900 military targets including over 400 artillery or rocket launchers and over 600 tanks or armored vehicles. NATO has also struck over 400 military command and control centres to halt the Qadhafi regime's ability to give orders to its forces. Targeting is done with extreme care and precision, using the weapon with the smallest yield possible, to avoid harm to the Libyan people and their infrastructure.

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