

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2011 8:04 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Placeholder Domestic media coverage on Operation Odyssey March 21, 2011

Fyi

From: Hammer, Michael A
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2011 07:58 AM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Placeholder Domestic media coverage on Operation Odyssey March 21, 2011

In case S is looking for it this am, we are working to add WSJ and any relevant Editorials/Op-eds. But for now hope this does the trick, going into mtgs with CDM.

Domestic media coverage on Operation Odyssey March 21, 2011

Over the course of Operation Odyssey, media coverage has shifted focus from actions on the ground to analysis of the U.S. political climate surrounding the military operation. While coverage does not directly indicate a rift within top levels of the U.S. Government, questioning of the U.S. mission's objective is at the forefront. Prevailing question is whether there is a clear and defined end to U.S. action. The overall tone indicates that the President's decision was risky test of his foreign policy leadership. Though top Administration officials come across as supportive of operations, there is not conveyance of USG wide support of military action, especially from Congressional leaders. Clips of Republicans criticizing the limited parameters the President has placed on U.S. participation, and Democratic leaders questioning the constitutionality of his authorization of American military action were incorporated into most television news coverage. Republican sentiment that the President was too slow to act in Libya echoed through coverage, much more so than liberal political disdain for military strikes.

Media asks almost unanimously, "Where does U.S. participation end and how are we to know that American boots will not end up on the ground in Libya?" Defense Secretary Gates' comment that the U.S. will turn over the preeminent role in operations in a matter of days is often juxtaposed against remarks that the mission could end with Qadhafi still in power.

Stories note President Obama's international travel during the operation, but do not portray it negatively. Domestic network coverage focused very little on the Arab League's dissent, which featured more prominently in print publications. Moussa's comments were included in reporting during the last 24 hours, but little analysis beyond the fact that loss of support from Arab leaders would be a particularly negative blow to Coalition efforts was conveyed. Correspondents and pundits were confused, even mystified, about the waffling sentiment of Middle Eastern leadership.

On the ground, media coverage of operations is portrayed as successful. Libyans are portrayed as generally being pleased with the support provided by Coalition military assets. Though U.S. officials clearly stated that Qadhafi nor his compound were direct targets, the missile strike on his home played widely in network television coverage. Media coverage of the compound strike did not suggest that it was a purposeful move on the part of the U.S.

NYT

With limited focus on the outcome of current tactical operations in Libya, the New York Times (Cooper/Sanger) delves into the objectives and actual scope of U.S. participation in the operation.

noting that Administration officials have continually defined America's participation as limited and clearly defined. Administration officials quoted in NYT coverage are on track with that message, but questions of how and when U.S. participation will taper are left open-ended. NYT alludes to in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq, had also assured Americans that campaigns would be short.

WaPo

The Washington Post provides broad coverage of international and domestic angles of the Operation Odyssey. From the ground in Libya the Post covers the triumph and jubilation of Libyans surveying the aftermath of Coalition strikes. In a separate story (by Cody) on the Arab League's shift in support for the strikes WP featured little analysis outside of the fact that loss of the Arab League endorsement would constitute a major setback to the U.S.-European campaign. The story noted that it is not clear how many Arab countries share Amr Mousa's sentiments.

Politico

Politico keys on disparate Congressional support for Libya operations. Noting Speaker Boehner's limited support but hesitance toward further action without Congressional consultation. Politico notes Senator Lugar's skepticism of the operation's "nebulous objective," which he expressed Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation." The website dedicated a story to lack GOP hopeful's silence or discontent with the President's decision. Newt Gingrich is scathingly critical of the President, referring to him as "spectator-in-chief."

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.