

RELEASE IN FULL

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**From:** Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2011 7:19 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Fw: Canadian foreign minister visits Libya rebels (Reuters)

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**From:** OpsNewsTicker  
**Sent:** Monday, June 27, 2011 06:32 PM  
**To:** NEWS-Mahogany  
**Cc:** SES-O  
**Subject:** Canadian foreign minister visits Libya rebels (Reuters)

VANCOUVER (Reuters) - There will be bumps on Libya's road to democracy even after current leader Muammar Gaddafi is overthrown, Canada's foreign minister said on Monday after meeting with Libyan rebel leaders in Benghazi.

John Baird, who made a secretive half-day visit to the rebel-held city of Benghazi, said he came away impressed with the rebels' commitment to pursuing democratic ideals, but recognized change will not come quickly.

"We're not going to move from Gaddafi to Thomas Jefferson overnight, but the road map and path they have laid out is a remarkably impressive one," Baird told reporters in a conference call from Rome.

Baird met with members of the National Transitional Council, which Canada recently recognized as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people.

For security reasons the timing of Baird's visit to Benghazi was not disclosed until after he had left the eastern Libyan city, although he had said earlier he was planning to visit the country.

The minister called his trip a fact-finding mission, and said he still believes the council represents the best option for the Libyan people to get a democratic government.

"Will it be perfect? Will it be without struggle? Absolutely not. I think we need to be realistic on that," he said. "There are no guarantees in life."

Baird's visit coincided with the announcement by the International Criminal Court Monday that it had issued an arrest warrant for Gaddafi, his son Saif al-Islam and Libyan intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senussi on charges of crimes against humanity.

The rebels have been battling Gaddafi's forces since late February, when thousands of people rebelled, prompting a fierce crackdown by Gaddafi's security forces in what has turned into the bloodiest of the Arab Spring uprisings.

Baird also traveled to a base in Sicily to meet with Canadian military air crews involved in the NATO mission in Libya.

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