

RELEASE IN PART
B5, B6

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, July 16, 2011 3:21 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Read-out of meeting

Fyi

----- Original Message -----

From: Feltman, Jeffrey D
Sent: Saturday, July 16, 2011 02:43 PM
To: 'Denis_R._McDonough'; 'Benjamin_I._Fishman'; 'Derek_H_Chollet'; 'tdonilon'; Sullivan, Jacob J; Wells, Alice G; Burns, William J; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Zeya, Uzra S; Schlicher, Ronald L; Cretz, Gene A; Sanderson, Janet A
Subject: Read-out of meeting

B6

Libyan participants:

1. Bashir Saleh, Qadhafi senior advisor
2. Mohammed Zaidi, Deputy FM
3. Fouad Zlitni, interpreter and advisor for Qadhafi
4. Mohammed Ismail, Chief of Staff to Seif al-Isla

U.S. participants:

1. Jeff Feltman
2. Gene Cretz

3. [Redacted]

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Bottom-line: we delivered our message, and did not hear anything particularly new from the Libyan side.

We met in the living room of the Ambassador's residence in Tunis. The meeting ran for almost 3 hours, and while the overall mood was respectful, it got pretty spirited at times (at one point, Qadahfi's interpreter got pretty wound up and yelled, "You bombed my office at 2am!").

Feltman opened by delivering talking points verbatim. He added that we don't want to see a divided Libya. We want the violence to end. We want to be partners in creating a better future for the Libyan people. Qadhafi's time is finished. The international community spoke with a clear and united voice in Istanbul. This is the time for Qadhafi to step down now on his own. We are here to emphasize that message and discuss the modalities of his departure. In Istanbul, all of the partner governments agreed to stop pursuing separate road maps and separate channels of communications with the

Libyan regime. Henceforth, UN Special Envoy Khattib will be the single point of contact. Cretz implored the group to think about what's good for their own futures and that of their country. [REDACTED]

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Zaidi spoke first for the Libyan side, and started with a stemwinder: saying that Libya felt betrayed by the U.S. after having given up its WMD in 2003 and cooperating on CT ("we gave up our weapons because we thought the U.S. would guarantee our security"). He insisted that the uprising in Libya had been instigated by foreign agents and led by Islamic jihadists. He accused the U.S. of being irrationally obsessed with one person, just as we had been with Saddam, Usama bin Laden, and Mullah Omar. He emphasized that Libya was principally a tribal society and could turn into the next Afghanistan or Somalia, or worse. Qadhafi is not the problem. Libyan has no civil society upon which to build a Western-style democracy. The U.S. needs to do two things: stop the NATO bombing campaign, and facilitate dialogue between the parties in Libya.

They challenged the notions that the uprisings are popular and broad-based. Media reporting is inaccurate and/or fabricated. It's no coincidence that Hizballah and Hamas's TV channels and Al-Jazeera are all supporting the rebels. In reality, they asserted, support for the regime is increasing inside Libya every day. Much of the fighting is more about inter-tribal vendettas rather than a popular uprising against the regime. The TNC lacks grass-roots support and credibility. They are Eastern Libyans trying to conquer Western Libya. Western Libyans will never accept them. The declaration made in Istanbul restricts rather than enhances the options for achieving a political solution.

We pushed back, but said while we will disagree on the origins of the uprisings and how we got here, we need to focus on a way forward.

Bashir insisted that we need to stop focusing on Qadhafi. He's more of a symbol than a political leader, akin to the Emperor of Japan or the Queen of England. His departure would not be accepted by the more than 60% of Libyans who support him. You cannot impose democracy and you cannot tell another country's leader that he must go. The Contact Group is a Western creation. It does not represent the international community. Sarkozy wants Libya's oil (because, he claimed, "you took the Gulf, and China took Sudan and Iran; Europe has nothing"). We need to sit down to negotiate without preconditions, he said.

The Libyans repeatedly insisted that the AU roadmap is the best path forward. Ceasefire first, then negotiations without preconditions and without foreign intervention. They claimed that Qadhafi promised AU leaders (Zuma) that he will not interfere in the political negotiations following the ceasefire.

We pressed them on the need for Qadhafi to leave before a ceasefire and political process, but they kept asking us to "keep Qadhafi out of your minds," insisting that he was only a symbol without administrative duties or any real power. (At one point, Bashir tried to illustrate this by describing how Q once took months off because he was tired, and the country still ran) We pushed back saying if this was true then it shouldn't be so hard for Qadhafi to take concrete steps to prove that he is not the leader.

At the conclusion of the three-hour meeting, it was clear that the Libyan delegation was not ready to accept or discuss the need for Qadhafi to step aside before a ceasefire or at the beginning of a political process. We agreed with them that we all seek an end to the violence and a political process that will lead to an inclusive government, and that there was simple trigger to make that happen: Qadhafi to step aside. But Qadhafi delegation is sticking by the elements of the AU roadmap.

Takeaways -- a couple things stood out. First, if there were any differences between the members of the Libyan delegation, they were not apparent. Second, they were still on the same points about Qadhafi's role and when he might go (at the end of a process). Third, they really pushed the AU roadmap, practically begging us to support it -- and barely mentioned the Russians or anyone else -- which leads us to think that working the AU will be very important in the days ahead. If the African stiffen their spines, then the Libyans would really be cornered. Bashir-Saleh took Jeff aside at the end to push again for us to review the AU plan, saying that all the elements we want are there, just in a different order than we were proposing. He seemed to be implying that we should trust them to get Q aside, and to trust them -- which

we don't -- on the timing. Finally, it was worth noting that they were fairly dismissive of Khatib ("we've spoken to him a hundred times"), despite our efforts to pump him up.

We told the Libyans that we aren't publicize the meeting, and they agreed. We told them that if it leaked, we would respond by making our message crystal clear and public.