

RELEASE IN FULL

CONFIDENTIAL

November 22, 2011

For: HRC
From: Sid
Re: New Libyan government; Belhaj's motives

SOURCE: Sources with direct access to the Libyan National Transitional Council, as well as the highest levels of European Governments, and Western Intelligence and security services.

1. On the evening of November 21, 2011, an individual with direct access to Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) stated in strict confidence that Libyan President Mustafa Abdel Jalil and newly chosen interim Prime Minister Abdurrahim el-Keib held final discussions regarding the new cabinet that el-Keib will announce on November 22. During the week of November 14, after six weeks of debate and discussion, Jalil, el-Keib, and Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Finance Ali Tarhouni decided that the senior cabinet positions should be filled by technocrats with limited ties to particular political, tribal, or religious factions. While they are concerned about the potential negative reaction from Islamist and tribal leaders, the three leaders of the interim government determined that it was important for the Interim Government to reassure the international diplomatic and business communities, who will be needed to rebuild, and develop Libya's full economic potential following the revolution.

2. According to these sources, the key negotiations took place between el-Keib and General Abdel Hakim Alamin Belhaj, a committed Islamist, and the commander of the NTC forces in the Tripoli region. During the week of November 14 el-Keib told Belhaj that he was a candidate to be Minister of Defense; however, the final decision was pending. At that time Belhaj stated that he would rather stay with his troops and maintain military command of the Tripoli region. According to a knowledgeable individual, el-Keib was surprised by Belhaj's position, suspecting that the former Libyan Fighting Group commander is positioning himself to become the leader of an Islamist opposition party that will contest the national elections, tentatively planned for mid-2012. El-Keib himself is a native of Tripoli and Jalil believes that he is best equipped to deal with Belhaj and other potential opposition leaders based in Tripoli.

3. In the opinion of a very sensitive source, Jalil is pleased by el-Keib's handling of the capture of Saif al-Islam Qaddafi over the weekend of November 19, and believes that these developments gave the NTC interim government an opportunity to manage the Islamists and other potential opposition groups, at least for the immediate future. Saif al Islam was captured by Zintan militia troops under the

direct command of General Ahmed al-Hamdouni, and under overall command of Zintan leader, General Osama al-Juwali. After this dramatic success, el-Keib, Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister Ali Tarhouni, and Jalil resolved to offer al-Juwali the post of Minister of Defense. After a brief discussion al-Juwali accepted the position. The new minister has a good relationship with Belhaj, but is dedicated to the Zintan region, and not a member or any particular religious, tribal, or political movement. At the same time, Belhaj told close associates that he is pleased with this appointment. He added that as the political situation develops he believes he can manipulate al-Juwali to support his positions.

4. On November 21 a close associate of Belhaj stated in strict confidence that he sees himself as the future leader of Libya, supported by the people and militias of Misurata, Zintan, and the Nafusah mountains. In this regard, he is willing to be patient and allow the new political process to develop. According to this individual, Belhaj believes that Jalil and el-Keib will be unable to rule in an effective manner, particularly given all of the competing factors at play in the country. Belhaj believes that his status as a front line commander in the revolution will, in the end, make him a more creditable figure than the technocrats el-Keib selected to man his government. One extremely sensitive source stated in confidence that Belhaj is receiving support and encouragement from his associates belonging to certain Sufi Islamic groups in Egypt.

5. (Source Comment: A very sensitive source noted that el-Keib and Jalil agree that while the various committees of the NTC will continue to play important roles in managing the nation, the specific ministers must have the principal roles in forming and carrying out national policy. This is an especially important point as el-Keib and his senior advisors move to set up an administration that can begin the process of stabilizing and rebuilding the country, while reestablishing Libya's relationship with the international business community. In this regard, they selected Hassan Ziglam of the Libyan National Oil Company as the Oil Minister. Jalil believes that Ziglam will reassure foreign oil companies regarding stability in Libya, while holding firm on the NTC commitment to make certain that all future contracts related to the oil sector of the Libyan economy serve the interests of the Libyan people and not just a ruling elite, as was the case in the days of Muammar Qaddafi. This effort is particularly important to Jalil and el-Keib as they deal with Belhaj and other potential political opponents, who are focused on any sign of corruption in the new regime. In this regard, Jalil wanted to appoint his longtime associate Abdulrahman Ben Yezza, who is an official of the Italian oil company ENI. However, Ben Yezza's high profile foreign connections made it impossible for him to join the cabinet in the current environment. Jalil plans to use Ben Yezza as a confidential advisor on the oil industry.)

6. According to a very sensitive source, once the new cabinet is announced and sworn in, the various ministries will begin addressing efforts by foreign firms to establish themselves in Egypt. These officials anticipate bureaucratic delays in developing these new relationships but believe that the survival of the el-Keib government depends on a speedy rebuilding process throughout the country as they recover from the revolution.