

RELEASE IN FULL

CONFIDENTIAL

For: Hillary

From: Sid

Re: Q's military strategy and rebel difficulties

Latest:

During the afternoon of March 25, individuals with access to advisors to Saif al Islam Qaddafi stated in confidence that forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi are feeling the effects of the western allies bombing and missile attacks, that began on March 19/20. According to these individuals, many of their tanks, armored cars, and heavy motorized guns have been destroyed in these attacks and, under orders from Libyan commanders in Tripoli, they have pulled back from the suburbs of the rebel stronghold of Benghazi. These forces consolidated their position in the important oil center of Ajdibiya, which they captured from rebel forces in mid-March. At the same time, in the view of these Libyan commanders, the rebels have begun to go back on the offensive, following 3 days of confused efforts to organize their forces after the allied raids began. These individuals believe that morale is deteriorating in units loyal to Qaddafi under the allied attacks. They are particularly bewildered by cruise missile attacks, which come with no warning.

At the same time, units loyal to Qaddafi have deployed throughout residential neighborhoods in Ajdibiya, areas they believe the allies will be reluctant to attack due to the danger of large

numbers of civilians being killed in any bombing. Two armored units attached to the 32nd battalion of the Libyan Army are dug in with their tanks on the road that bypasses downtown Ajdibiya. These forces will have to be defeated before the rebels can move into the town, where they expect difficult house to house fighting. Qaddafi's forces believe that the rebels will hesitate before moving into this urban area, where they cannot receive support from allied aircraft and missiles.

(Source Comment: Libyan Army commanders believe that French, British and Egyptian Special Forces units are supporting the rebels. They suspect these foreign troops are targeting their positions and concentrating on keeping the roads to Egypt open, allowing regular supplies to reach Benghazi, Tobruk and other rebel held centers.)

According to these individuals, the hurried unilateral attack by the French on March 19 placed the coalition in a difficult political and diplomatic situation with the Arab League and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which have both condemned the manner in which the UN resolution on Libya was put into action. The support of these two international bodies is vital to the coalition because it legitimizes the intervention. If the coalition loses the support of this important part of the international community it may limit the scope of their attacks, which in turn may lead to a stalemate between Qaddafi's forces and the rebels. The rebel leaders are concerned that this course of action will create two Libyan states locked in an ongoing struggle.

According to sources with access to the NLC, the dialogue going on between certain rebel leaders in Benghazi and potential allies in Tripoli has become very difficult because the inhabitants of Tripolitania fear domination by the people of the eastern region of Cyrenaica. Longstanding ethnic and tribal divisions are complicating efforts to coordinate a common rebel strategy for east and west Libya, while Qaddafi remains in power.

(Source Comment: These knowledgeable individuals believe that complications between the rebels in the east and west provide a picture of the potential difficulties involved in organizing a post-Qaddafi regime. Many individual tribal and political groups are expected to strike independent deals with the allies regarding current support and future access to oil reserves. This will be a challenge for the allies as well as the Libyan people as they try to move beyond Qaddafi.)