

US/NATO breeding division, conflict and chaos in Africa

by Dan Glazebrook via stele - Counterpunch *Friday, May 25 2012, 11:54pm*

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An Ongoing Disaster Libya, Africa and Africom

The scale of the ongoing tragedy visited on Libya by NATO and its allies is becoming horribly clearer with each passing day. Estimates of those killed so far vary, but 50,000 seems like a low estimate; indeed the British Ministry of Defence was boasting that the onslaught had killed 35,000 as early as last May. But this number is constantly growing.

The destruction of the state's forces by British, French and American blitzkrieg has left the country in a state of total anarchy - in the worst possible sense of the word. Having had nothing to unite them other than a temporary willingness to act as NATO's foot soldiers, the former 'rebels' are now turning on each other. 147 were killed in in-fighting in Southern Libya in a single week earlier this year, and in recent weeks government buildings - including the Prime Ministerial compound - have come under fire by 'rebels' demanding cash payment for their services. \$1.4 billion has been paid out already - demonstrating once again that it was the forces of NATO colonialism, not Gaddafi, who were reliant on 'mercenaries' - but payments were suspended last month due to widespread nepotism. Corruption is becoming endemic - a further \$2.5 billion in oil revenues that was supposed to have been transferred to the national treasury remains unaccounted for. Libyan resources are now being jointly plundered by the oil multinationals and a handful of chosen families from amongst the country's new elites; a classic neo-colonial stitch-up. The use of these resources for giant infrastructure projects such as the Great Manmade River, and the massive raising of living standards over the past four decades (Libyan life expectancy rose from 51 to 77 since Gaddafi came to power in 1969) sadly looks to have already become a thing of the past.

But woe betide anyone who mentions that now. It was decided long ago that no supporters of Gaddafi would be allowed to stand in the upcoming elections, but recent changes have gone even further. Law 37, passed by the new NATO-imposed government last month, has created a new crime of 'glorifying' the former government or its leader - subject to a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Would this include a passing comment that things were better under Gaddafi? The law is cleverly vague enough to be open to interpretation. It is a recipe for institutionalised political persecution.

Even more indicative of the contempt for the rule of law amongst the new government - a government, remember, which has yet to receive any semblance of popular mandate, and whose only power base remains the colonial armed forces - is Law 38. This law has now guaranteed immunity from prosecution for anyone who committed crimes aimed at "promoting or protecting the revolution". Those responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Tawergha - such as Misrata's self-proclaimed "brigade for the purging of black skins" - can continue their hunting down of that cities' refugees in the full knowledge that they have the new 'law' on their side. Those responsible for the massacres in Sirte and elsewhere have nothing to fear. Those involved in the widespread torture of detainees can continue without repercussions - so long as it is aimed at "protecting the revolution" - i.e. maintaining NATO-TNC dictatorship.

This is the reality of the new Libya: civil war, squandered resources, and societal collapse, where voicing preference for the days when Libya was prosperous and at peace is a crime, but lynching

and torture is not only permitted but encouraged.

Nor has the disaster remained a national one. Libya's destabilisation has already spread to Mali, prompting a coup, and huge numbers of refugees - especially amongst Libya's large black migrant population - have fled to neighbouring countries in a desperate attempt to escape both aerial destruction and lynch mob rampage, putting further pressure on resources elsewhere. Many Libyan fighters, their work done in Libya, have now been shipped by their imperial masters to Syria to spread their sectarian violence there too.

Most worrying for the African continent, however, is the forward march of AFRICOM - the US military's African command - in the wake of the aggression against Libya. It is no coincidence that barely a month after the fall of Tripoli - and in the same month Gaddafi was murdered (October 2011) - the US announced it was sending troops to no less than four more African countries - the Central African Republic, Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. AFRICOM have now announced an unprecedented fourteen major joint military exercises in African countries for 2012. The military re-conquest of Africa is rolling steadily on.

None of this would have been possible whilst Gaddafi was still in power. As founder of the African Union, its biggest donor, and its one-time elected Chairman, he wielded serious influence on the continent. It was partly thanks to him that the US was forced to establish AFRICOM's HQ in Stuttgart in Germany when it was established in February 2008, rather than in Africa itself; he offered cash and investments to African governments who rejected US requests for bases. Libya under his leadership had an estimated \$150 billion of investments in Africa, and the Libyan proposal, backed with £30 billion cash, for an African Union Development Bank would have seriously reduced African financial dependence on the West. In short, Gaddafi's Libya was the single biggest obstacle to AFRICOM penetration of the continent.

Now he has gone, AFRICOM is stepping up its work. The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan showed the West that wars in which their own citizens get killed are not popular; AFRICOM is designed to ensure that in the coming colonial wars against Africa, it will be Africans who do the fighting and dying, not Westerners. The forces of the African Union are to become integrated into AFRICOM under a US-led chain of command. Gaddafi would never have stood for it; that is why he had to go.

And if you want a vision of Africa under AFRICOM tutelage, look no further than Libya, NATO's model of an African state: condemned to decades of violence and trauma, and utterly incapable of either providing for its people, or contributing to regional or continental independence. The new military colonialism in Africa must not be allowed to advance another inch.

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