

Box 3.5 Libya

After forty-two years in power, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's regime crumbled in August 2011, as Libyan rebel forces took control of Tripoli and sent the dictator and his remaining supporters into hiding. The UN General Assembly subsequently ceded Libya's seat to the National Transitional Council (NTC) in September, recognizing the body as the country's legitimate representative. Qaddafi was killed on 20 October during the Battle of Sirte, a month-long offensive waged by NTC forces against his final stronghold. Three days later, NTC chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil pronounced the end of the uprising and declared Libya "liberated."

Antigovernment protests erupted in Benghazi in February 2011 and quickly spread to neighboring regions in the east. Decades of political repression, socioeconomic disparity, and entrenched patronage fueled opposition to the regime. Qaddafi's regime responded by harshly cracking down on protesters, triggering further dissidence across the country and the defection of a number of top officials. The international community widely condemned Qaddafi's use of force and on 26 February the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1970, demanding an immediate end to the violence, levying sanctions against the regime, and calling for the International Criminal Court to investigate the regime for war crimes. The following day, the opposition in Benghazi formed the NTC in an effort to coordinate resistance efforts.

On 17 March, the Security Council passed Resolution 1973, calling for member states to protect civilians by all means necessary, authorizing the use of force, and imposing a no-fly zone over Libya. NATO eventually assumed responsibility for conducting air strikes through Operation Unified Protector, with the United States, the United Kingdom, and France playing particularly central roles. The NATO campaign was initially opposed by a number of states. The African Union, led by South Africa, was especially critical, calling instead

NATO Operation Unified Protector

• Authorization Date	17 March 2011 (UNSC Res. 1973)
• Start Date	23 March 2011
• End Date	31 October 2011
• Head of Mission	Vice Admiral Rinaldo Veri (Italy)
• Budget	\$7 million (23 March 2011–30 September 2011)
• Strength as of 30 September 2011	Troops: 8,000 Civilian Staff: 80

for a political solution to the conflict. Moreover, NATO faced internal divisions over the scale and intensity of operations, with only eight of its twenty-eight member states participating. By mid-April, however, NATO had ramped up its attacks, striking Qaddafi's compound in Tripoli among other high-profile targets. The mission's activities have highlighted the thin boundary between protection of civilians and peace enforcement in international peace operations.

In April the European Union announced the creation of EUFOR Libya, a military operation designed to support humanitarian relief in the country. The mission's mandate stated that deployment was predicated on a request for assistance from the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). However, because the assistance was never requested, the mission never deployed.

NTC forces made rapid gains throughout June and July, due in part to NATO military assistance and arms shipments from France. At the same time, the divide between supporters and critics of the NATO operation widened as the international community increasingly called for a political solution to the conflict, with a possible role for Qaddafi in negotiations. Such a settlement seemed unlikely, however, as NTC forces swiftly entered Tripoli on 22 August and captured the capital shortly thereafter. Following the

rebels' ultimate victory at the Battle of Sirte, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2016, ending authorization for Operation Unified Protector as of 31 October.

During the conflict, UN diplomatic and mediation efforts were carried out by Special Envoy Abdel-Elah al-Khatib, appointed by the Secretary-General to broker a political solution. In April, Ian Martin was appointed Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on postconflict planning in Libya and, with support from the UN system (in addition to the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration), developed a pre-assessment plan for UN engagement in the postconflict period. While the initial analysis included contingencies for both military and police, the NTC has since made clear that it would not be receptive to foreign military personnel on Libyan soil, though it is open to police assistance.¹ The NTC has also requested the UN's aid in planning for elections.

On 16 September, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2009, establishing the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) for an initial period of three months and subsequently extended it for an additional three months. This political mission will assist the NTC in a number of efforts, including restoring the rule of law, drafting a new constitution, preparing for elections, and extending state authority.

Note: 1. "UN Shelves Libya Military Observer Plan," *CBC News*, 31 August, 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2011/08/31/libya-united-nations-military.html>.