

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, April 1, 2011 5:28 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Information on Libya, AQ, and al-Hasidi
Attachments: Hasidi Libyan rebel commander.docx; Hasidi Libyan rebel commander.docx

FYI

From: Wright, Janey F
Sent: Friday, April 01, 2011 5:27 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Information on Libya, AQ, and al-Hasidi

Jake,

Attached and below is what I was able to find out at the unclassified level on Libya, AQ, and al-Hasidi. I can tell you a bit more at a higher classification level.

Janey

Information on Libya, AQ, and al-Hasidi

- Based on conversations with NEA, they do not believe that Abdulhakim al-Hasidi is linked to Al Qaeda or that Al Qaeda is fighting with the rebel forces in Libya.
- Per my query, NEA put the question to Ahmed Jabril, an advisor to Transitional National Council (TNC) Chairman Mustafa Abdeljalil. He responded that al-Hasidi does not have a role as a commander of the rebel forces. The military is currently co-coordinated by Omar Hariri & Abdelfattah Younis, former Minister of the Interior. But there are press reports that there is likely to be a military leadership change (see translated media report below).

The TNC advisor also reported that Abdulhakim al-Hasidi himself denied allegations that he was a leader in the opposition's military campaign against the regime and that he was working to create an Islamic state in Darna (a city east of Benghazi).

The TNC advisor said that these allegations were propagated by Saif al-Islam and the regime to disparage the opposition and cause the West to be distrustful of the opposition, council, and revolutionary movement. He added that Abdulhakim al-Hasidi appeared on CNN to flatly deny all of Saif al-Islam's allegation.

Separately, former regime Ambassador to the UN Abdulrahman Shalgham (and current TNC representative to the organization) suggested to Ambassador Cretz that while there may be lingering Al Qaeda sympathizers in the country's east (about 100), the Libyan government did not believe there remained active Al Qaeda fighters.

Others I have checked with say we just don't know enough about the make-up or leadership of the rebel forces (due to classification reasons, I can talk more in person about this if you would like).

NEA also noted that *The Economist* yesterday published the following:

The freeing by post-revolutionary Egypt and Tunisia of thousands of Islamist political prisoners has closed a dark chapter for human rights in those countries. Outfits like Libya's Islamic Fighting Group and Egypt's Jamaat Islamiya, both of which pursued terror campaigns in the 1990s and were on the radical fringe, express a newfound keenness for peaceful politics, explaining that their past resort to violence was only a response to repression. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group has changed its name to the Libyan Islamic Movement, and its 12-member politburo has pledged allegiance to the National Council in Benghazi.

Media Report (Translated from Arabic)

The Interim National Transitional Council in Libya said that they are considering a change in the military leadership after Al Qadhafi forces took over Brega again and made a real progress in other areas of the East, while the revolutionaries are still trying to defend Ijdabeya and Misurata.

The recent developments on the ground in Libya - which Al Qadhafi forces managed through it to regain control again on the towns of Brega and Ras Lanuf - has prompted the Council to convene a meeting to review the aspects of the military affairs after the retreat of the revolutionaries.

The meeting - which was held on Thursday, in the city of Benghazi in the east - was attended by the leaders of the Military Council and representatives of the coalition of February 17 revolution, also it was attended for the first time by delegates from the people of Misurata.

The head of the Council, Mustafa Abdul Jalil said that the revolutionaries lack organization, and he did not rule out a change in military leadership of the management of operations in the field.

Background on LIFG/Libya/ al-Hasidi (due to classification reasons, I can tell you a bit more in person, if you would like)

- In terms of info on al-Hasidi specifically, he admitted that in the past he fought against coalition troops in Iraq and recruited "around 25" men from Derna in Eastern Libya for this purpose.
- West Point's Combating Terrorism Center conducted a review of documents captured by allied forces from the town of Sinjar, Iraq, and released a report in the 2007 timeframe on foreign fighters entering Iraq via Syria.
- This report revealed that while Saudi Arabia was by far the most common nationality of the fighters in the sample, Libya was the next most common country of origin. Libya contributed far more fighters per capita than any other nationality in the Sinjar Records (these records document the city/town/country of origin).

- Al-Hasidi was a member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). The LIFG initially cooperated with Al-Qaeda, culminating in officially joining al-Qaeda in November 2007. However, as noted above, LIFG recently changed its name and pledged its allegiance to the National Council in Benghazi.
- As noted in the press, al-Hasidi participated in killing dozens of Libyan troops in guerrilla attacks around Derna and Benghazi in 1995 and 1996.
- According to the 2007 West Point Report: "Both Darnah and Benghazi have long been associated with Islamic militancy in Libya, in particular for an uprising by Islamist organizations in the mid-1990s.

The Libyan government blamed the uprising in the mid-1990's on "infiltrators from the Sudan and Egypt" and one group—the Libyan Fighting Group (jama'ah al-libiyah al-muqatilah)—claimed to have Afghan veterans in its ranks.

The Libyan uprisings became extraordinarily violent. Qadhafi used helicopter gunships in Benghazi, cut telephone, electricity, and water supplies to Darnah and famously claimed that the militants "deserve to die without trial, like dogs."

Abu Layth al-Libi, LIFG's Emir, reinforced Benghazi and Darnah's importance to Libyan jihadis in his announcement, at the time, that LIFG had joined al-Qa'ida, saying: It is with the grace of God that we were hoisting the banner of jihad against this apostate regime under the leadership of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which sacrificed the elite of its sons and commanders in combating this regime whose blood was spilled on the mountains of Darnah, the streets of Benghazi, the outskirts of Tripoli, the desert of Sabha, and the sands of the beach."

- Qadafhi, in order to retain his power, fought the LIFG.
- One particular view (just a view that I thought was worth noting) and one that some quarters might raise was characterized to me as follows:

What is happening in Libya cannot be described as a problem, but as a condition (emanating from tribal culture, long historical conflicts, etc.). It's not something that is resolvable per se. But it can be leveraged.

Ergo, for those who want Qadafhi gone, according to this view, care should be taken in who is supported, and before doing so, consideration should be given to removal of the remaining weapons infrastructure -- chemical, pharmaceutical, mustard gas, weapons plants, etc. -- before they come under new management.



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