



News from Veterans For Peace

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VFP Statement on Military Intervention in Libya

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“The President does not have power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation.”

-Senator Barack Obama, 2007

On March 19, 2011, the President, without Congressional approval, ordered the attack on multiple targets in Libya. Under the guise of enforcing a “no-fly zone” the United States launched over 110 Tomahawk cruise missiles and flew over 113 sorties. At a cost of \$1,066,465 per missile that amounts to \$117,311,150 for just the munitions, not to mention the fuel and operating costs for the ships and planes used in the attacks. A USAF F-15E Strike Eagle was also lost in the conflict at a cost of \$31.1 million. There was also the unseen cost of the aircraft used in the rescue mission and an unknown number of civilians injured.

From 1979 to 1989, the United States Central Intelligence Agency conducted Operation Cyclone, the largest and most expensive CIA operation in its history. Hailed as a great success, Operation Cyclone successfully led to the unseating of the USSR supported People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Operation Cyclone exploited fundamentalist Islam to motivate a group which became known as the Mujahedeen, funding and arming them to push the PDPA and the Soviet Union out militarily. Members of the Mujahedeen included Osama Bin Laden, and many other global figures in the group we now refer to as Al Qaeda.

Operation Cyclone, aside from being almost entirely covert, bears a striking resemblance to the current US operation wherein a sectarian and rather brutal totalitarian regime is being overthrown with US support by exploiting Islamic fundamentalists. While we know little about the rebels the US is aiding, we do know that many have fought against the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan. The US has a long history of fomenting the overthrow of governments not supporting our financial interest. That history also shows repeated violent backlash against the US both by those supported, and those who have been overthrown.

Oil prices have also climbed to their highest levels since 2008, another unseen cost of war. As unemployment continues at 9.2%, many Americans will be unable to keep up with rising fuel costs. This problem may lead to increased unemployment if people can't

afford to get to their jobs, leading to a further downward spiral of the economy. In Yemen and Bahrain uprisings seen as part of the “Arab Spring” have been violently suppressed without significant action from the US; it is worth noting that both governments have been extremely compliant with US corporate interests in reference to our energy interests, and both nations allow US bases to be housed on their soil.

While Gadhafi's actions against the Libyan people are reprehensible, the air strikes have not prevented his ground forces from being able to attack rebels and civilians. There are many atrocities occurring around the globe, but the United States government does not have the capability to fix them all. Additionally, bombing military targets and imposing a no-fly zone does very little to assist starving people and prevent human rights violations. Turkey has proposed diplomatic solutions to this crisis, yet the UN and NATO have continued military strikes. With no clear goal in mind, when is the end of the mission? Is the ousting of Gadhafi the only goal? Is it the role of the UN, NATO, and US to set up a new government by use of force? Is collateral damage and enormous costs from air strikes worthwhile without an endgame in site? Has the US government not learned from interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan that going to war without a plan leads to exorbitant and never-ending costs? History shows us that this type of intervention rarely goes without blowback and unintended consequences, perhaps with a \$1.4 trillion deficit and a domestic budget in crisis our best outcome would be to support peaceful alternatives and not add to the violence of a Libyan civil war at all.

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