



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on June 25, 2011

House Votes Against Libyan War — and Against Restricting Its Funding

Indeed, as [Politico](#) put it, the House of Representatives' latest expression of opposition to Obama's war is "a rebuke the White House can live with." On Friday the House voted overwhelmingly — 295 to 123, with 70 Democrats among the 295 No voters — against a resolution supporting the Libya mission that is similar to a Senate resolution sponsored by Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.). An hour later, however, it also turned down a measure that would have prohibited funding of certain operations in Libya. That bill failed, 238 to 180, a victim of Boehner's attempts at compromise.



According to [The Hill](#), Boehner had originally intended to have the House vote on both the resolution authorizing the war and one calling for its termination. However, says the paper, "after a closed-door conference meeting on Wednesday," the House leadership replaced the anti-war resolution with a bill that merely restricted funding for the war to "support operations like search and rescue, aerial refueling, operational planning, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance," according to the [New York Times](#). The watered-down resolution, which Boehner called "a sensible approach," satisfied neither hawks nor doves — nor, for that matter, constitutionalists such as Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) — and deservedly went down to defeat along with the pro-war resolution.

Paul, naturally, voted against the resolution supporting the war since the operation is inconsistent with the Constitution. At the same time, he also voted against the bill that would have restricted the war's funding, pointing out that such funding is already illegal and that "instead of ending the war against Libya, this bill would legalize nearly everything the president is currently doing there."

Likewise, Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.) said, "The United States does not have a King's Army. I will not offer tacit approval of the President's actions. That is why I voted no on these resolutions. Neither acknowledged the grave fact that President Obama violated and continues to flout our Constitution as well as the War Powers Resolution."

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) — who, along with Paul, Bartlett, and several other congressmen, is [suing](#) the Obama administration over the war — also opposed the pro-war resolution, asking, "We don't have enough wars going on? We have to wage war against another nation which did not attack us?" Unlike Paul and Bartlett, however, Kucinich supported the bill to restrict funding, saying it would "[end] direct U.S. hostilities immediately," but asked his colleagues to "vote for a total cutoff of funds for this wrongheaded adventure" when Congress returns from recess.

Boehner and others who voted to allow the war to continue by virtue of supporting one or both bills cited the need to support NATO as the reason for their votes. Obama's press secretary, Jay Carney —



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“sounding a lot like a Bush White House spokesman hitting Democrats opposing the Iraq war,” *Politico* remarks — similarly claimed that a vote to cut the mission short was a vote to abandon “our allies.”

In fact, as the Kucinich lawsuit makes clear, the mission itself undermines NATO because it is a violation of the North Atlantic Treaty, which, the complaint explains, “allows only for military actions in defense of a member state or states.” Since Libya has not attacked a NATO member state, NATO has no business attacking Libya. Moreover, the suit notes, NATO member Norway “is withdrawing its support for air operations in Libya,” and NATO member Germany “declined to support the Libyan mission.” The United States, therefore, is under no obligation to participate in the mission, and it certainly should not do so absent a congressional declaration of war.

The administration was perfectly satisfied with the outcome of the two votes because it changes nothing, which may have been the point of Boehner’s maneuvering. He had, after all, [seen to it](#) earlier that a Kucinich resolution demanding an end to the war did not succeed. This time he managed to prevent the House from voting on a similar resolution or even trying to restrict the war’s funding. Why a Republican leader is so eager to assist a Democratic President in his violation of the law may be explained by Boehner’s remark that he “support[s] the removal of the Libyan regime.” In other words, he fully subscribes to the notion that the United States must be “dictatress of the world,” in the apt phraseology of [John Quincy Adams](#). If maintaining American global hegemony requires letting the President — even one of the opposing party — violate the law, then so be it, his thinking apparently goes.

The Constitution, however, brooks no such compromises. The President may not go to war without a declaration from Congress. If he does, Congress should see to it that the war is ended as soon as possible; it should not act as a presidential rubber stamp. Unfortunately, that is exactly what it is doing by not forcing Obama to call off his Libyan misadventure.

Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) is a prime example of the rubber-stamp mindset. Though he finds the Libyan mission and its cost without justification, Flake said, “The time for debate over whether to authorize U.S. armed forces to engage in Libya was months ago, before the U.S. entered into the NATO operation.” He then proceeded to vote both in favor of authorizing the war and against restricting its funding. No Roman Senator was ever more subservient to Caesar.

Americans should encourage Congress to find its backbone before the United States goes the way of Rome.



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