



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on April 21, 2011

Obama Sends \$25 Million in “Nonlethal” Aid to Libyan Rebels

As if it weren't enough that the Obama administration is spending hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars on an unconstitutional war on Libya, the administration took the occasion of every taxpayer's favorite day of the year, April 15, to announce that it is going to send \$25 million worth of “nonlethal” aid to the rebels fighting against the regime of Col. Moammar Gadhafi.



[The Washington Times](#) has obtained a copy of a letter from Joseph E. Macmanus, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in which Macmanus described to Congress the administration's plans to provide the aid. “The president's proposed actions would provide urgently needed nonlethal assistance to support efforts to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack in Libya,” Macmanus wrote. He explained that Obama had authorized “any U.S. government agency to provide assistance to support efforts by Libyan groups ... to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack in Libya.”

The administration, it should be noted, did not seek permission from Congress to spend taxpayers' money in this fashion; it merely notified legislators that it intends to do so. The obvious assumption is that the President may tap the Treasury for \$25 million for whatever foreign misadventures he so chooses. If Congress has indeed given the executive branch a slush fund for foreign intervention, then shame on Congress. If it has not, then the illegality of the war has now been compounded by this expenditure, increasing the urgency of [ending the intervention](#) and [impeaching the President](#). As attorney Bruce Fein, who has drafted an article of impeachment because of the war, asked rhetorically, “If [Obama] can wipe out the war powers authorization, why can't he wipe out Congress's authority to spend?” He may well be doing just that with this latest announcement.

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Even if the expenditure were legal, however, it would still be ill-advised. Trying to determine who the “good guys” are in a foreign war is rarely as simple as it is in the movies, and the U.S. government's record of picking allies is not encouraging. This is the same government, after all, that chose to back



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the Afghan Mujahadeen, some of whom later became al-Qaeda, and the Kosovo Liberation Army, another Islamic terrorist organization. With al-Qaeda fighters [known](#) to be among the Libyan rebels, the United States could once again be aiding its own enemies.

Naturally, the Obama administration took great pains to assure Congress that it was doing no such thing, telling the Senate committee that the Transitional National Council, the rebels' political wing, "has publicly rejected terrorism, embraced the Geneva Conventions, and emphasized its dedication to building democratic institutions to provide for a secular future in which a broad range of Libyan citizens will be able to participate." This is, of course, the same administration that just a few weeks ago [professed ignorance](#) of the rebels' possible terrorist affiliations. Now, however, it is certain that the TNC is a fine, upstanding bunch of citizens with only the best interests of their fellow Libyans at heart (as evidenced, perhaps, by the fact that they have already [established](#) an oil company and that time-tested tool of tyranny, a central bank).

The administration also made it clear that the aid to the rebels would be nonlethal in nature, encompassing "vehicles, fuel trucks and fuel bladders, ambulances, medical equipment, protective vests, binoculars, and non-secure radios," according to a memorandum accompanying the letter to the committee. But as a concerned Senate aide, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the *Times*: "The justification in the letter appears to claim the TNC is stable, democratic and adhering to the Geneva Conventions. If all of this is true, then why can't you provide lethal military assistance as well?"

Indeed, such "mission creep" is a serious concern. What began as a supposedly limited, short-term mission to protect Libyan civilians has become a much larger and longer-lasting engagement, with U.S. aircraft [continuing to fly bombing missions](#) over the country and Europe almost daily widening its involvement. Now the President is proposing to expand the mission further by providing direct, albeit nonlethal, assistance to rebels who may very well include avowed enemies of the United States and who, in any case, are hardly a known quantity. If that fails to topple Gadhafi — something Obama has said must happen even while insisting that regime change is not U.S. policy — can lethal assistance be far behind? After that, will "boots on the ground" follow, as [suggested](#) by the head of the U.S. African Command?

The way things are going, Libya could turn out to be Obama's Iraq. For the sake of our country, Congress (now) or the voters (next year) need to save the President from himself.

Photo: President Barack Obama makes a statement on Libya, March 18, 2011, in the East Room of the White House in Washington: AP Images

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