



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 30, 2011

Al-Qaeda and NATO's Islamic Extremists Taking Over Libya

Elements of al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremist groups were known to be key players in the NATO-backed uprising in Libya from the beginning, but now it appears that prominent Jihadists and terrorists are practically leading the revolution with Western support.



One terror leader in particular, Abdelhakim Belhaj, made [headlines around the world](#) over the weekend after it emerged that he was [appointed](#) the chief of Tripoli's rebel Military Council. Prior to leading rebel forces against Gaddafi's regime, Belhaj was the founder and leader of the notorious Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG).

Eventually the terror "Emir," as he has been called, was arrested and tortured as an American prisoner in the terror war. In 2004, according to reports, he was transferred to the Gaddafi regime — then a U.S. terror-war ally.

By 2010, Belhaj was freed by Gaddafi under an amnesty agreement for "former" terrorists. And more recently, the terror leader and his men were [trained](#) by U.S. special forces to take on Gaddafi.

"We proudly announce the liberation of Libya and that Libya has become free and that the rule of the tyrant and the era of oppression is behind us," Belhaj was [quoted as saying](#) by ABC after his forces sacked one of Gaddafi's compounds. His leadership is now well established.

While most news reports about Belhaj acknowledged that the LIFG has been designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department, many accounts inaccurately downplayed the group's links to terror and al-Qaeda. But evidence suggests the two terrorist organizations actually merged several years ago.

According to a [study](#) by the U.S. military, the organization had an "increasingly cooperative relationship with al-Qa'ida, which culminated in the LIFG officially joining al-Qa'ida on November 3, 2007." And even before that, former CIA boss George Tenet warned the U.S. Senate in 2004 that al-Qaeda-linked groups like the LIFG represented "one of the most immediate threats" to American security.

A few reporters, however, have highlighted the seriousness of the problem. Journalist Pepe Escobar, one of the first to report the news of Belhadj's rise to power in Tripoli, explained in the *Asia Times*: "Every intelligence agency in the US, Europe and the Arab world knows where he's [Belhadj's] coming from. He's already made sure in Libya that himself and his militia will only settle for sharia law."

Escobar also noted that the repercussions would be widespread. "The story of how an al-Qaeda asset turned out to be the top Libyan military commander in still war-torn Tripoli is bound to shatter — once again — that wilderness of mirrors that is the 'war on terror,'" he [noted](#). It will also compromise "the



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carefully constructed propaganda of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) 'humanitarian' intervention in Libya."

Israeli intelligence group Debka also drew attention to the situation in a recent analysis. "Belhadj is on record as rejecting any political form of coexistence with the Crusaders excepting jihad," the organization noted in a piece entitled "[Pro-Al Qaeda brigades control Qaddafi Tripoli strongholds seized by rebels.](#)"

Belhadj, of course, is hardly the only al-Qaeda terrorist leading rebel forces in the NATO-backed takeover of Libya. Abdel-Hakim al-Hasidi, another key insurgent military commander, has also [boasted](#) of his links to terror groups and his battles against U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Countless other "former" terrorists, many of whom [are well-known to American officials](#), are also deeply embedded in the new rebel regime. And according to CNN, hundreds of al-Qaeda-linked Islamic extremists have been set free from Libyan prisons in recent days and weeks by rebel forces.

"Nobody knows what these released prisoners are going to do next," [explained](#) Noman Benotman, identified as a "former Libyan Jihadist" and senior LIFG leader. "Will they take part in the fighting and if they do will they join pre-existing rebel brigades or form a separate fighting force?"

On top of that, because the rebel government has already been recognized by Western governments, it will soon be receiving billions of dollars that were seized from the Gaddafi regime. Massive aid packages and overwhelming military support have been flowing to the rebels for months.

Al-Qaeda fighters and other Islamic extremists are also now in possession of huge stockpiles of advanced military weaponry including missiles and possibly even weapons of mass destruction. Concern about chemical agents falling into their hands is growing quickly.

NATO powers, which secretly armed the rebels before Western intervention became official, also flooded the nation with arms. And Gaddafi's stockpiles have been thoroughly raided, adding even more fuel to the fire as the weapons begin to flow toward Jihadists around the world.

And the battle is indeed expanding. Al-Qaeda is now targeting regimes that did not back the Libyan rebellion. After an attack on an important Algerian military academy that left 18 dead, for example, a [statement](#) released by al-Qaeda said the strike was due to Algeria "continuing to support the Libyan dictator Gaddafi to fight against our brothers."

As *The New American* [reported](#) in March, top al-Qaeda figures actually backed and praised the rebellion in Libya from the very beginning. Many key terrorist leaders were known to be intimately involved with the NATO-backed uprising.

Ironically perhaps, Gaddafi claimed from the start that the rebels were Western agents and al-Qaeda leaders. But despite U.S. Senators McCain and Lieberman having [praised](#) the regime several years earlier as an "ally" in the terror war deserving of American weapons, Gaddafi's statements were dismissed by most analysts.

Eventually, however, even top U.S. officials confirmed that there were at least "flickers" of al-Qaeda among the rebel leadership. Now it is becoming increasingly apparent that they are firmly in control. And [evidence of widespread war crimes by NATO and its extremist proxies on the ground](#) is mounting by the day.

Congressman and GOP presidential candidate Ron Paul warned that the worst for Libyans may be yet to come. "We face a situation where a rebel element we have been assisting may very well be radical



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jihadists, bent on our destruction, and placed in positions of power in a new government,” he said in a statement released last week. “Worse still, Gadhafi’s successor is likely to be just as bad, or worse, than Gadhafi himself.”

The [aftermath of NATO’s Libya war](#) will almost certainly be bloody and fraught with problems. And even though the truth is difficult to discern amid [a web of lies emanating from both sides](#), what has been learned doesn’t paint a bright picture for the future.

Sharia law is [enshrined in the draft Constitution](#), and the violence shows no signs of easing thus far. The rebel “Transitional Council” also [announced](#) early on that it had created a Western-style central bank to take over from Gaddafi’s state-owned monetary authority.

Even as Libya spirals deeper into chaos and Gaddafi vows to fight on for years, NATO may well be [planning further “regime change” missions](#) for other Middle Eastern nations. Islamic extremists, meanwhile, are arming and preparing themselves for more violence as they exploit the situation to gain more power. Analysts say the nightmare is only beginning.

Photo: Rebel fighters belonging to a battalion commanded by Abdel-Moneim Mokhtar, a former Libyan rebel fighter and military commander in the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), who was ambushed and killed by Moammar Gadhafi’s troops last April. AP ImageS



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