



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on October 19, 2011

Brutal Gadhafi Regime Fights On in Western Libya

Even as the National Transitional Council's (NTC) forces surrounded key loyalist strongholds such as the city of Sirte, pro-Gadhafi troops were [reportedly](#) putting up stiff resistance. Fierce gun battles were still raging even in the capital despite rebels having announced the "fall" of Tripoli months ago.



This week the NTC began stepping up house-to-house searches and road-block checkpoints in search of Gadhafi loyalists in the capital. Pockets of armed resistance in Tripoli, including pro-regime demonstrations, continue to pop up as well.

Several days ago Gadhafi supporters bearing weapons marched out into the streets of various Tripoli neighborhoods chanting pro-regime slogans, according to news [reports](#). NTC troops shouting "Allahu Akbarr" rushed to the demonstrations and fired on the crowds, leaving multiple casualties on both sides.

The NTC began its assault on Gadhafi's hometown of Sirte — which the despot declared to be the new capital after rebel forces swarmed into Tripoli — on September 15. The town is considered crucial to the Western-backed revolutionaries, who insist they will not officially announce the "liberation" of Libya until after the city falls.

Thousands of civilians are [thought](#) to be trapped in Sirte, according to media accounts. Estimates on the number of Gadhafi fighters vary widely between a few hundred to over a thousand.

"Yesterday evening, we used artillery cannon to shell the neighborhoods," Martyrs of Free Libya Brigade field commander Nasser Moghassabi [told](#) AFP last week. "The situation today remains the same. We are still surrounding the two neighborhoods."

Just a few days later, rebel fighters — suffering heavy casualties — were [forced to pull back](#) and regroup. NATO war planes took over and continued to bombard the town from the air, hoping to demoralize the remaining die-hard Gadhafi loyalists and destroy their remaining defenses.

Ground attacks on Sirte have since resumed, but the green flag associated with the regime is still flying over the town. Conflicting reports indicated that one of Gadhafi's sons either is now — or at least was — holed up somewhere in the city.

Analysts [said](#) the NTC's failure to take the coastal town raised questions about its ability to rule over the entire nation. Others blasted the lack of results from the two-month campaign for postponing Libya's "[transition to democracy](#)."

But significant areas of another Gadhafi stronghold, the town of Bani Walid, [reportedly](#) fell to rebel forces earlier this week. Reuters reported that the new regime's flag could be seen flying from several buildings in the city center.



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As fighting rages on, NATO has been hinting that its aerial bombing campaign might soon come to an end. According to a spokesman for the Western military alliance, however, the existence of large pockets of pro-Gadhafi resistance still threaten civilians.

President Obama and other Western leaders originally said the mission — approved by the United Nations, but [not the U.S. Congress as required by the Constitution](#) — would last just days or weeks. But more than six months and 10,000 air strikes later, NATO is still heavily involved.

Analysts expected that “regime change” would be quick and relatively easy — especially because hatred of Gadhafi was believed to be widespread. Incredibly, however — even with the overwhelming support of the most powerful military alliance on earth — Gadhafi continues to bedevil the revolutionaries and their Western backers.

Millions of protesters have [reportedly rallied](#) in support of their embattled dictator since the outbreak of rebellion in February. Gadhafi apologists cite his [“Green Book”](#) and the creation of what the dictator calls a Jamahiriya (roughly translated as “state of the masses”) as the reason for his support.

Others point to fear, while some experts claimed his socialist programs and robust welfare state contributed to the loyalty. But there is another key point: Despite the well-documented brutality of his rule, Gadhafi — like most governments — ensured some level of popular support by using divide-and-conquer tactics and creating whole classes of citizens dependent on his regime’s largesse.

Still, analysts say it probably was not enough to sustain the dictatorship through the massive international onslaught currently underway. Even though Gadhafi showered some groups in Libya with benefits, his 42-year reign over Libya has been marked by terror, brutality, and bloody suppression of dissent. The record is extensive, and the victims will not forget easily.

Death by firing squad and torture was regularly meted out to dissenters. And opposition was all but prohibited. Political parties, for example, were completely banned. The penalty for creating or joining one was often execution.

Beyond politics, certain minorities also became victims. Jews, for instance, were expelled from the country decades ago and their property was seized by the regime.

Over four decades, Gadhafi’s maniacal rule claimed thousands of victims’ lives. The total may never be known. One of the worst alleged atrocities took place in 1996 at the [Abu Salim prison](#), where, according to human rights groups, over a thousand prisoners were slaughtered.

But even overseas, exiled Libyan dissidents were not safe. Gadhafi’s assassins were known to use diplomatic cover to target enemies of the regime abroad. During an anti-regime protest at the Libyan embassy in London, the dictatorship’s “diplomats” even fired into the crowd, [killing a British police officer](#).

Gadhafi also had a long history of supporting terrorists and communist murderers abroad using the vast oil wealth at his disposal. As Christian Gomez explained in an article for *The New American*, [Gadhafi’s Libya played a crucial role as an agent of Soviet menace](#).

From the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the Irish Republican Army to the Palestinian Liberation Organization and countless African revolutionary groups, the regime’s largesse played a key role in advancing world revolution. Gadhafi provided arms, training, money, and more to a broad array of geopolitical players — especially those targeting the Free World.

The regime in Tripoli also helped send Soviet weapons to countless ruthless dictators and aspiring



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communist rulers. Gadhafi even sent his troops to support the mass-murdering Ugandan tyrant Idi Amin.

But incredibly, during the Bush administration, Gadhafi's brutal regime became an important Washington ally in the terror war. Apparently both governments were targeting the same gaggle of Islamists, many of whom are now [playing key roles in the Libyan revolution with U.S. support](#).

As recently as 2009, when a high-level bipartisan U.S. delegation traveled to Tripoli, Gadhafi was still in America's good graces. In fact, a leaked American diplomatic cable [concluded](#) the regime was a valuable ally that should receive even more U.S. military support.

"[U.S. Senator Joe] Lieberman called Libya an important ally in the war on terrorism," the WikiLeaks cable noted, describing a meeting between the American delegation and the Libyan regime. Former GOP presidential candidate Senator John McCain, meanwhile, "assured [Gadhafi's son] Muatassim that the United States wanted to provide Libya with the equipment it needs for its security."

Even before the Western-backed revolution officially broke out, however, the U.S. government abandoned Gadhafi and began to arm and train rebel forces. Many of the rebellion's leaders were Islamic extremists affiliated with al-Qaeda who had previously been jailed by the American government. But despite boasting of battling U.S. troops, the revolutionaries [suddenly became American allies](#) and "freedom fighters."

At that point, as *The New American* reported, Gadhafi turned to the communist dictatorship ruling mainland China for arms and support. And the PRC, according to regime documents, was [more than willing to comply](#), offering to send all of the military equipment at its disposal through Algeria or South Africa.

Today Gadhafi is thought to be hiding somewhere in the vast Libyan desert. But he continues to broadcast messages taunting NTC forces and urging his supporters to fight on.

In late August he [vowed to keep fighting](#) even as his regime claimed to have the ability to keep the battle going for years. But as the civil war drags on, Gadhafi's end appears increasingly certain. The question now, according to [analysts](#), is whether the new regime will be any better than the last.

Photo of Libyan revolutionary fighter: AP Images

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