



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 6, 2011

The Islamic Republic of Libya, Courtesy of U.S.A.

Recent reports suggest that Libya is poised to become the third Islamic state established in the last decade with the help of the United States. On August 26 The New American reported that a draft constitution released by the Libyan Transitional National Council (TNC), the rebel group that has taken charge since the ouster of Col. Moammar Gadhafi, declares: "Islam is the religion of the state and the principal source of legislation is Islamic jurisprudence (sharia)." This wording is very similar to the post-U.S. invasion constitutions of Iraq and Afghanistan.



There are, apparently, those in Libya not convinced that the TNC is serious about its commitment to Islam. The *Washington Times*' Bill Gertz writes:

U.S. officials said spy agencies are stepping up surveillance of Islamist-oriented elements among Libyan rebels. A government report circulated Tuesday said extremists were observed "strategizing" on Internet forums about how to set up an Islamist state in Libya after the regime of Col. Gadhafi is defeated.

Of course, there seem to be about as many strategies as there are jihadists:

A jihadist writing as Asuli Mutatari, stated on the Shumukh al-Islam Network forum that "the real war will be fought after the fall of the tyrant [Col. Gadhafi] and after the establishment of a transitional democratic system.

"After the awakening, we will fight those outside the [Islamic] law," he stated.

Another forum posting urged Islamists to "quickly take control of cities with economic resources and strategic locations and establish Islamic courts there."

A jihadist identified as Abu Abra' al-Muqadas said the National Transitional Council must be neutralized because it will never allow anyone calling for an Islamic state to be part of the new government.

"They know that merely suggesting the application of Islamic law will cause Western countries to stop their support," he said.

Another jihadist suggested liquidating the entire TNC, while still another told alleged " sleeper cells" trained by al-Qaeda to lie low for the time being to keep the United States in the dark about their existence. Others quite wisely recommended "the expulsion of foreign bases and reduction of foreign influence," according to Gertz.

In short, there is a lot of talk on the Internet, but how much of it will translate into action remains to be seen. The government's report, Gertz notes, "said the jihadists' strength and influence on the ground 'are uncertain at this time.'"

However, the report said the jihadist plotting coincided with the high-profile emergence of Abu



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Abdallah al-Sadiq, a former leader of the al Qaeda-linked Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) and now a leading rebel. He is currently known as Abdel Hakim al-Khulidi Belhaj and led rebels in overrunning Col. Gadhafi's Tripoli compound.

This would be the same Abdel Hakim al-Khulidi Belhaj that, as *TNA* reported September 3, the Central Intelligence Agency rendered to Gadhafi several years ago and who says he was tortured by CIA agents in Bangkok and then spent six years in solitary confinement in Libya. The United States has good reason, therefore, to fear the rise of such a man. Though Belhaj's faction of LIFG appears to have ceased supporting al-Qaeda, Gertz writes, "there are concerns that some LIFG members remain committed to al Qaeda and others may be temporarily renouncing their ties to the terrorist group for 'show.'"

Why was the report leaked to Gertz? One possibility is that the Obama administration wants to make certain that Americans don't get the idea that U.S. personnel can return home now that Gadhafi has been removed from power. If jihadists are likely to take over in the absence of foreign powers, then those foreign powers will just have to stay indefinitely — the same excuse given for [keeping U.S. troops in Afghanistan through at least 2024](#).

Another possible explanation for the leaking of the report is that a faction within the government that opposes the Libyan intervention is trying to convince the public how poorly thought out the whole mission was. Many critics have been saying the same thing from the war's outset, noting in late March that the rebels' ranks were [peppered with al-Qaeda](#) members and that a positive outcome of the war, even assuming Gadhafi could be ousted, was by no means certain.

Given the proposed constitution, the leadership role of Belhaj, the potential for a jihadist takeover, and — as the [Associated Press](#) reports — the rebels' rounding up of black Africans without due process of law, Libya appears to be little more hospitable to liberty and human rights now than it was when Gadhafi still held the reins. In other words, it's Iraq and Afghanistan all over again, only — one hopes — on a much smaller scale.

Barack Obama thought that, as an enlightened liberal, he could make humanitarian intervention work where the self-proclaimed "compassionate conservative" George W. Bush had failed. The problem, however, lay not with the person in charge of the policy but with the policy itself.

Congress has had multiple opportunities to put a [stop](#) to U.S. intervention in Libya but has thus far failed to do so. Legislators could still salvage some of their constitutional prerogatives — and perhaps many American lives — by doing their duty now and getting the United States out of Libya before the Libyans drive us out the long, hard, bloody way.

Photo: Libyan women attend Muslims weekly Friday prayers in Benghazi, Libya, April 22, 2011, the same day that U.S. Sen. John McCain praised Libya's rebels as his "heroes" in a visit to their capital: AP Images



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