



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on September 15, 2011

U.S. Role Unclear in Planned UN Libya Mission

The United Nations Security Council is considering a resolution to establish a UN mission in Libya, unfreeze assets of two major oil companies and repeal a ban on flights by Libyan aircraft. Great Britain was circulating a draft of the resolution among the 15 member nations of the Security Council Tuesday night and is hoping for a vote on it by the end of this week, the Associated Press reported on Wednesday.

Meanwhile the [Financial Times](#) of London quoted an unnamed U.S. official as saying that the United States will play a “modest” role in aiding recovery in Libya, where rebel forces recently ousted Muammar Qaddafi, ending his 42-year reign.



“We’re not going to be engaged in nation building in the traditional sense of what we did in Afghanistan and Iraq, there are not going to be millions or billions of US taxpayer dollars going out there,” a senior administration official in Washington told the international business daily. Instead, Libya’s reconstruction would be guided by a UN framework and assisted by unspecified number of countries and by multilateral organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary fund.

“There is ample opportunity for everyone to help, starting with policing and helping get the oil resources back on tap,” the official said. The World Bank on Tuesday recognized the Libya’s interim leadership, called the National Transitional Council, and said it would examine the need for repairs to Libya’s water, energy and transportation sectors and would work with the IMF in overhauling the country’s banking sector. Libya seeks to restore civil government after the insurrection that topped the Gaddafi regime and to rebuild the nation’s infrastructure, said to be crumbling from years of neglect. But with the United States and many European countries struggling with sluggish economies and mounting debt and the U.S. still mired in costly war and reconstruction efforts and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—estimated by the Congressional Research Service to have cost \$1.28 trillion so far—international aid might be hard to come by. Ali Suleiman Aujali, the NTC ambassador to the US, said Libya isn’t looking for money from other nations, but only access to its own funds.

“We don’t need aid. What we want is to unfreeze the money we have in the US and in European countries,” Aujali told the *Financial Times* on Wednesday. The US has released \$1.5 billion of Libyan funds that were frozen under UN sanctions while Gaddafi was in power and Great Britain and France have also released funds. But the NTC says it still cannot get access to billions more, including about \$34 billion in the United States. It is urging the UN sanctions committee to lift the freeze and to remove Libyan corporations, including the government-owned oil company, from its embargo. “We need money now to start the reconstruction and pay salaries,” Aujali said. “We have to let the Libyan people taste the wealth that they have not been able to taste for so long.”

The draft resolution before the Security Council would lift the asset freeze on the Libyan National Oil



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Corporation and Zueitina Oil Company and modify the freeze on the Central Bank of Libya, the Libyan Foreign Bank, the Libyan Investment Authority and the Libyan Africa Investment Portfoli, the AP reported. It would retain the asset freeze and travel ban against Gaddafi and key family members and regime supporters. It calls for the establishment of a United Nations Support Mission in Libya for an initial period of three months to assist the new government in restoring security and the rule of law, promoting national reconciliation and embarking on the process of writing a constitution and preparing for elections. It would also authorize U.N. assistance in extending the new government's authority throughout the country and in starting economic recovery.

The Voice of America reported last week that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has requested authorization for such a mission. In a letter he sent to the Security Council, the Secretary General said the National Transitional Council has asked for UN and international assistance. In requesting an initial three-month authorization, Ban said he might ask for an extension beyond that time. He said the mission would be political in nature and not one involving United Nations peacekeepers.

But if the AP's description of the draft resolution is accurate, "extending the new government's authority throughout the country" and "restoring security and the rule of law" sounds like a mission requiring "peacekeepers." --especially in light of reports that Gaddafi, who remains at large, has been urging his supporters to attack the institutions of the NTC and that Gaddafi loyalists continue to battle defenders of the interim government in the cities of Bani, Walid and Site and are said to be gearing up for a potentially ferocious battle in the southern city of Subha.

The UN mission would no doubt be involved in policing human rights violations by both Gaddafi loyalists and the rebel forces that drove them from power. Gaddafi's forces are believed to have committed more crimes but there have also been reports of attacks by the rebels against people of darker skin because Gaddafi recruited soldiers from sub-Saharan Africa. Gabonese diplomat Jean Ping, chairman of the African Union Commission, said Wednesday that many of the 28 members of the African Union had not recognized the National Transitional Council because of reports of racial violence. The proposed resolution would authorize the U.N. to help the new government "protect human rights, particularly for those belonging to vulnerable groups." It also refers to the Security Council's decision in February to refer Libya to the International Criminal Court. The court's prosecutor has charged Gaddafi and his regime unleashing a campaign of murder and torture in an effort to end anti-government protests.

What role the United States, a UN founder and member of the Security Council, might play in Libya's future remains unclear. "We're going to be guided by what Libyans themselves think is appropriate," Jeffrey Feltman, Washington's top Middle East envoy, said on a visit to Tripoli on Wednesday. "I am deeply moved to witness the efforts, courage and admirable resolve of the Libyan people paying off, as together they build a new and democratic Libya," Feltman said at a press conference in the Libyan capital. The U.S. envoy is the highest-ranking western official to publicly visit the Libyan capital since armed militias drove Col Gaddafi from power.

American warplanes were heavily involved in the NATO bombing campaign in support of the Libyan rebels, but Feltman said the United States is not assisting in the manhunt for Gaddafi, who is believed to be still in Libya. NTC leaders believe Gaddafi's capture is crucial to securing the country.

The United States has been involved in a number of UN missions, including the controversial peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to which President Bill Clinton committed U.S. troops without the authorization of Congress. Between wars with Iraq, the United States led UN security



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patrols in that country. When 15 Americans were killed by friendly fire there in April of 1994, then-Vice President Al Gore referred to them as “those who died in the service of the United Nations.”

The statement provoked an outcry among Americans who believe U.S. military forces should be committed only in the service and defense of the United States.

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