

A VIEW TO EXTREMIST CURRENTS IN
LIBYA

K R O N O S

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ISSUE SUMMARY

Delivering regime change in Libya was no small feat. For decades, secular and Islamist Libyan elements had sought to remove dictator Muammar al-Qadhafi from power. Perhaps none of these groups fought so fervently to depose the so-called “Mad Dog of the Middle East” as the jihadi terrorist organization known as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. Today, the group’s emir, Abd al-Hakim Belhadj, is said to command as many as 25,000 rebel fighters from Tripoli. As the leader of the Tripoli Military Council he is one of the most important figures among the rebels who are poised to assume key roles in the post-Qadhafi era. Despite early indications that the Libyan revolution might be a largely secular undertaking, and despite the fact that Belhadj was not among the rebel fighters recently appointed to serve in the cabinet of Libya’s interim prime minister, the very extremist currents that have shaped the philosophies of Salafists and jihadis like Belhadj appear to be coalescing to define the future of Libya through its upcoming elections.

The LIFG was established in South Asia in 1990 by Libyan jihadis who had volunteered to fight the Soviets. Its founders were focused narrowly on toppling the “apostate” Qadhafi regime. Though the contingent of Libyans who fought the communists was quite small compared to the numbers of fighters from various Middle Eastern states, the group’s battlefield prowess and religiosity helped its leaders to establish close ties with foremost leaders of the mujahidin. And when he left South Asia following the fall of Afghanistan’s Soviet-aligned government, several of the LIFG’s leaders joined Usama bin Laden in Sudan.

Many Libyans who were members of the LIFG would become important figures within Core al-Qa’ida, particularly after 1998, when the Qadhafi regime effectively quashed their insurgency in Libya and forced much of the group into exile in Afghanistan. Libyans who assumed high-profile roles within al-Qa’ida include Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, Abu Laith al-Libi, Abu Faraj al-Libi, and Abu Yahya al-Libi.

At times turbulent, the LIFG’s relationship with al-Qa’ida received a great deal of attention in 2007 due to an announcement that a contingent of LIFG Shura Council members and fighters in AfPak had

joined al-Qa’ida being widely mischaracterized as an announcement of a merger of the LIFG with al-Qa’ida.

Regardless of whether the LIFG formally merged with al-Qa’ida, history reveals that inasmuch as al-Qa’ida helped train and supported the LIFG’s fighters the LIFG played a critical role preparing al-Qa’ida and Taliban fighters for operations targeting Western forces. Indeed, leaked JTF-GTMO detainee assessments reveal that training provided at a camp in Afghanistan by one LIFG military committee official was so renowned that at least one al-Qa’ida member visited the camp for the expressed purpose of undergoing training provided by him to prepare for participation in the 9/11 plot.

The 2007 AQ-LIFG “merger” announcement arrived soon after several LIFG leaders, including LIFG emir Belhadj and LIFG Sharia official Sami al-Saadi, had begun negotiating with the Qadhafi regime while held at Libya’s infamous Abu Salim prison. The regime sought a public repudiation of the premise underlining the LIFG’s mission: Waging jihad for the purpose of delivering regime change in Libya was justified by Sharia, and thus Islam permitted devout Muslims to assassinate Qadhafi. LIFG members who remained at large in AfPak were clearly displeased with this situation, and cautioned jihadis to consider the dialogue between LIFG leaders and the regime was manifest by coercive measures.

These LIFG leaders’ publication of a 400-plus-page book in 2009 that addressed the regime’s concerns led to even more mischaracterizations of LIFG-related developments. Moreover, the resultant misconceptions manifest by inaccurate reporting on the LIFG’s “revisions” have likely influenced decisions made in Washington and Brussels since February 17, 2011.

Titled “Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Enforcement of Morality, and Judgment of People,” this work was hailed as a repudiation of al-Qa’ida and Islamic terrorism in general. Yet it would seem many journalists reporting on the work did not closely review it.

Contents of the LIFG’s Corrective Studies would no-doubt alarm most policy makers — its authors sought to “correct” the path of true defensive jihad,

not abolish it altogether. For instance, the authors pronounced jihad is an obligation for Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. They argued these places are occupied by foreign military powers, and therefore must be liberated through resistance in the form of violent jihad.

Many of the LIFG's imprisoned leaders were released from Abu Salim during 2010. Following a decision to disband the LIFG, Belhadj and other former LIFG members created a new organization called the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change. Belhadj is also reportedly supporting a political party that was recently established by one of Libya's top clerics to advance Islamist interests in upcoming elections.

Various former LIFG members assumed leadership roles in militias which coordinated their operations with the Transitional National Council early in the revolution. Meanwhile, sensitive to Western concerns, the TNC dismissed allegations that any such jihadis were directly involved with its efforts. Indeed, not long after he defected late in February, Qadhafi's secularist-leaning interior minister, General Abd-al-Fattah Yunus, who had helped the regime suppress Islamist movements, became the chief of the TNC's military forces. What's more, the spokesperson for the TNC's military forces even lauded the killing of Usama bin Laden.

The tide swiftly turned soon after Gen Yunus was assassinated late in July 2011 — allegedly at the hands of LIFG-affiliated rebels who were said to have been exacting revenge for his actions against the LIFG while a Qadhafi regime official. TNC Chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil, Libya's present day interim president, soon sacked the TNC's executive committee, citing incompetence surrounding the investigation of Gen Yunus' death. Thereafter, the influence of Islamist elements expanded rapidly in Libya.

Late in August 2011, Belhadj suddenly assumed power over a large contingent of Tripoli's rebel forces after a group of his fighters seized control of Qadhafi's Baba az' Azia palace. Other rebel militia leaders described the move as an unwelcomed power play, pointing out that Belhadj had hardly participated in the revolution before this battle. This, despite his 25-year friendship with the revolution's spiritual guide, Qatar-based Libyan Islamist cleric Sheikh Ali al-Sallabi.

Days later, Belhadj accompanied TNC Chairman

Jalil on a trip to meet with financiers of the revolution and NATO officials in Qatar, a conservative Muslim state which had become a key supplier of arms to Libya's rebel fighters. Belhadj was also named chairman of Tripoli's military council. In this position, Belhadj reportedly has de facto military authority over a third of Libya's population.

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya have also shaped the political dimension of the 2011 revolution in Libya. Welcomed by Qadhafi's predecessor, the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya was targeted by Libyan security forces under Qadhafi's iron-fisted autocratic rule. While its influence has grown substantially in places like the capital city of Tripoli since it fell to rebel forces, MB's role in the revolution was detectable from the beginning of the uprisings vis-à-vis its global leadership's influence on Ali al-Sallabi.

Ali al-Sallabi is a popular Libyan Islamist cleric who for years served as a mediator between the Qadhafi regime and the hordes of Islamists and jihadis jailed in Libya. Al-Sallabi and Belhadj have openly worked closely together since Belhadj became chairman of the Tripoli Military Council. And his brother Ismail al-Sallabi rose to prominence early in the revolution as the leader of the influential Benghazi-based February 17 Martyrs' Brigade, members of which were allegedly involved in the assassination of Gen Yunus.

Ali al-Sallabi is a contemporary of Qatar-based Egyptian cleric Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Often referred to as the Muslim Brotherhood's chief imam and a spiritual guide of HAMAS, al-Qaradawi is one of the world's most influential Muslim religious figures. The host of a program broadcast by Al Jazeera, al-Qaradawi is a firebrand preacher who endorses suicide bombings targeting Israeli Jews and their children, and has declared the participation of foreign fighters in the anti-Coalition insurgency in Iraq permissible under Sharia. More recently, al-Qaradawi took particular interest in Libya's revolution. During an appearance on Al Jazeera on February, 21, 2011, he issued a fatwa that called for Libyan soldiers to assassinate Qadhafi.

While one would imagine Washington has learned ample lessons from coordinating covert operations with jihadi groups, it seems the prudence of working with the Brotherhood continues to be contemplated. A recent CIA report titled "Muslim Brotherhood: Pivotal Actor in European Political

Islam” notes that “MB groups are likely to be pivotal to the future of political Islam in Europe ... They also show impressive internal dynamism, organization, and media savvy.” And while the report’s authors acknowledged that European intelligence services “consider the Brotherhood a security threat and critics – including more pluralistic Muslims – accuse it of hindering Muslim social integration,” they concluded that “MB-related groups offer an alternative to more violent Islamic movements.”

Yet history – much of which in this particular vein remains classified – reveals the West’s efforts to work with this self-defined Salafist movement have tended to backfire.

For policy makers, it is worth considering that although the Brotherhood does not embrace global jihad against the West, its support of violent jihad in Israel and Iraq is a veritable endorsement of terrorism. Concerning MB’s Salafist aims, national security managers tasked with advancing our Arab

Spring-related interests would be wise to remain mindful that what may seem moderate in places like Egypt or Libya may easily be categorized as radical in the West.

This report has been produced to present policy makers a window into the history of radical Islam in Libya, several stewards of which played key roles in Libya’s revolution. While focused on the most prominent of this country’s extremist groups, the LIFG, this report also offers information about other elements whose agendas appear to parallel those of this apparently moribund Foreign Terrorist Organization – Salafists and jihadis who are among the most influential figures in Libya today. Additionally, the report’s author presents a list of questions developed to help policy makers gain stronger insights of what is taking shape inside Libya – with focus on the impact these events may have on the spread of violent extremism – when discussing these matters with intelligence officials.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The LIFG proclaims its activity in order to fulfill the duty of Jihad in the way of Allah the Exalted and move the worshippers out of worshipping the worshippers and into the worship of the Lord of worshippers, from the narrowness of this world to the vastness of the Hereafter, and from the oppression of religions to the justice of Islam.

Then it was time for the LIFG to leave the state of secrecy and go to a state of publicity, due to the delicate stage that the Jihadi activity in Libya was going through. ...

Truly, confronting the tyrants of this age — the like of Qadhafi — has become the most necessary duty after the belief in Allah the Exalted, so that the Sharia (Islamic law) of Allah the Mighty and Supreme may rule, and so that the Muslims in Libya will enjoy their lives under the protection of this divine way and be rid of the subjugation, oppression and tyranny that they used to suffer for more than four centuries under this oppressing age. ...

We pledge ourselves before Allah the Blessed and Exalted to walk the path of blessed Jihad until the tyranny will fall and the religion of Allah the Mighty and Supreme will rise, and on that day the believers will rejoice in the triumph of Allah.

—The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group

Excerpts from the communiqué announcing the LIFG's existence, October 18, 1995

The LIFG, while proclaiming its solidarity and support for the sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman, reminds all of the Muslims the right of this venerable sheikh and warns the tyrant Americans about the wrath of the Muslims, who are fed up with the American oppression that wreaks havoc upon the earth.

—Commander of the LIFG, Abu Abdallah al-Sadiq (Abd al-Hakim Belhadj)

Excerpt from the LIFG's letter of support to jailed 1993 World Trade Center attack coconspirator Omar Abd al-Rahman (aka The Blind Sheikh), May 31, 1997

The obvious American hostility against the Muslims in Sudan and Afghanistan, the killing of the innocent, the spreading of terror among the peaceful and the making of some of the civil and industrial institutions into a target without any reason or proof — all these confirm that the American government has chosen the path towards stirring up our Islamic nation, and is pleased to adopt the policy of public confrontation.

The LIFG — since it highly disapproves of this brutal attack and proclaims its support of the Muslims in Sudan and Afghanistan — is presenting some of the facts before the Islamic nation as evidence in regard to the fact that the U.S.A. is not only an enemy of the Mujahid sheikh Usama Bin Laden and the Islamic movements, but it is an enemy of the Islamic nation. ...

The U.S.A. has stood alongside the Jews, ever since their state was established and to this day, against the Islamic nation, and provided them with weapons with which millions of innocent Muslims were killed. The U.S.A. has supported them — and still does — politically in international circles and rises against any decision that does not serve the interest of the Jewish state.

The U.S.A. is the one that has bombarded the civil institutions and neighborhoods in Iraq, and prevented food and medicine from the Muslim people of Iraq, which has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of the sons of Iraq in the least, and Saddam Hussein is still intact. The U.S.A. is the one whose airplanes have attacked Libya, not to destroy Qadhafi, but to destroy the houses of Muslims in Libya, and it has besieged wrongfully the people of Libya so that the Muslims there will suffer. ...

And before this American tyranny there is no longer anything the Islamic nation in general and the Islamic movement in particular can do, besides confronting it in order to defend its religion, its territory and its honor.

The LIFG calls upon the Muslims to stand in the face of the American hostility in order to ward off this vicious attack against the sons of our Islamic nation, and to be warned of the poisons of the media, which is manipulated by enemies of the nation in order to tear its ranks asunder and warn its sons.

—Libyan Islamic Fighting Group Political Bureau

Excerpts from a communiqué concerning the U.S. missile strikes targeting Usama bin Laden's facilities in Sudan and Afghanistan following al-Qa'ida's 1998 attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, August 25, 1998

If a Muslim land is occupied, then its people should fight the occupier. Others should also help them with funds and weapons, in spirit, through prayers, and in any way possible. The Muslims are one nation.

—Global Muslim Brotherhood thought leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi

Responding to a question about whether Sharia law permitted foreign insurgents to enter Iraq to fight Coalition forces during an appearance on Al Jazeera Television, September 19, 2004

We are a Libyan Islamic movement that rose in our country over 50 years ago in explicit terms and with the involvement of well-known persons and leaders. It has always been primarily concerned with Libyan national affairs. The most important point for us is that the foundation of our ideology is Islam, which forms our people's identity and cultural framework of reference.

—Libyan Muslim Brotherhood leader Sulayman Abd al-Qadir

On the history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya, August 27, 2008

I'd like to say that the only thing I hope for is that as my life approaches its end, Allah will give me an opportunity to go to the land of Jihad and resistance, even if in a wheelchair. I will shoot Allah's enemies, the Jews, and they will throw a bomb at me, and thus, I will seal my life with martyrdom. Praise be to Allah ...

—Global Muslim Brotherhood thought leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi

During an appearance on Al Jazeera Television, January 28, 2009

Throughout history, Allah has imposed upon the [Jews] people who would punish them for their corruption. The last punishment was carried out by Hitler. By means of all the things he did to them — even though they exaggerated this issue — he managed to put them in their place. This was divine punishment for them. Allah willing, the next time will be at the hand of the believers.

—Global Muslim Brotherhood thought leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi

During an appearance on Al Jazeera Television, January 30, 2009

I hereby issue a fatwa to the officers and soldiers who can kill Mu'ammarr Al-Qadhafi: Whoever among them can fire a bullet at him, thus relieving the country and the people of him, should do so. This man wants to annihilate the people, so I am protecting the people.

I rule that whoever can fire a bullet, and relieve us, as well as Libya and its great people, of this man's evil and danger, should do so.

—Global Muslim Brotherhood thought leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi

During an appearance on Al Jazeera Television, February 21, 2011

Noble people, with all your loyal tribes, continue your path, and with the aid of God, define your goal, renew your commitment, and head toward your aim without hesitation or discouragement. Toss Qadhafi off the cliff of humiliation. The price for any discouragement or hesitation will be greater humiliation and disrespect, which will last for decades. They will be darker decades than those you suffered for all those years. ...

This is a call to what is left of truthful Libyan scholars and well-meaning preachers, the loyal elite, the young people jealous [of their faith], to do their best to gain the best fruit from this revolution and not be taken advantage of after all these efforts and sacrifices by those traitors who go after their own interests and follow only their desires, who want to ride your efforts and exploit your blood. ...

Let your weapons be in your hands. Gather and store as much as you can. Beware. Beware of neglecting them or giving them up. ...

So let our Muslim people, who have lived and continue to live under myriad conditions of oppression, persecution, humiliation and fear, know that their true happiness and pure freedom lies in reverting back to Sharia and the path of God Almighty. ...

—al-Qa’ida Sharia committee member and former LIFG member Abu Yahya al-Libi

Excerpts from a message titled “To Our People in Libya,” March 12, 2011

May God keep the descendants of Umar al-Mukhtar, God rest his soul, who defied with their bare chests the arrogance and tyranny of the tyrant Al-Qadhafi and his crimes. I ask God to have mercy on their martyrs; to heal their wounded; to hasten the release of their prisoners, and to grant them success in supporting their religion and their ummah. I ask god to support them in preserving their sanctities and honor; and to bless them with His glorious victory and His near relief. ...

We must meet the needs our brothers in Libya so that the West will not use their tragedies as a justification for intervention in Libya and occupation and hegemony upon its affairs....

I warn our people in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, and everywhere against the crocodile tears that the United States sheds today for the tragedies of the Libyans, for the United States is the last with the right to talk about freedom, human rights, justice, and protection of civilians.

Why did the United States not move against Al-Qadhafi before the uprising of the Libyan people?

Was it not the United States that turned over detainees to Al-Qadhafi in its war against Islam in the name of a War on Terror, so that they could be tortured, maltreated, and killed? Among them was the martyr, as we consider him to be, the Shaykh Ibn-al-Shaykh al-Libi, and among them were the leaders of the Libyan [Islamic] Fighting Group.

—al-Qa’ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri

Excerpts from a message regarding the “Arab Spring,” April 15, 2011

Now it has been revealed after the discovery of documents (in the headquarters of Libyan Intelligence) that intelligence organizations had participated and helped the Libyan Intelligence in arresting me through direct information and commissions. After my arrest in Malaysia, the Central Intelligence Agency, according to what I was told by the Malaysian security organizations, intervened and I was deported to Bangkok after I asked to leave Kuala Lumpur. I said to them: If you do not want to give me asylum, let me leave. Then they booked me on a flight to Bangkok, and there I found CIA members waiting for me. I was kidnapped immediately, and they had a secret prison at the airport. I was tortured in that place in the airport, and then I was handed over to the Libyans.

I believe that what I was exposed to was the direct result of what the CIA did. Now, it has been proved by these documents that the British Intelligence Organizations had a hand in this issue. I have submitted my demands (an apology and

compensation) because what happened was contradictory to the human rights to which these governments claim to be committed and these governments interfere in the affairs of other governments on the pretext that they do not respect human rights.

—Tripoli Military Council Chairman, Libyan Islamic Movement for Change Co-founder, and former LIFG emir Abd al-Hakim Belhadj (aka Abu Abdallah al-Sadiq)

Discussing with investigative journalist Camille Tawil the discoveries of secret documents in Tripoli that revealed the roles MI6 and the CIA played in the rendition of Belhadj to Libya, September 19, 2011

Everything is negotiable between Libya and NATO, or between Libya and the United States. ... I believe that when the Libyans see that the Americans and the Europeans — they came to help them to rescue them from the hands of this brutal regime just for the sake of the humanity and the sake of the Libyan that had been captured at Qadhafi's hands for many decades — it will be in the history. Of course it will have a different meaning if the Americans and the Europeans had been paid for what they spent.

—TNC Ambassador Ali Aujali

Responding to the question of whether the U.S. should anticipate compensation for expenses incurred assisting Libya's rebels during an interview with Fox News Channel correspondent Jennifer Griffin, October 20, 2011

We, as an Islamic state, determined that Islamic law is a major source for legislation, and on this basis any law which contradicts the principles of Islam and Islamic law will be considered null and void.

—TNC Chairman and former Qadhafi regime Justice Minister Mustafa Abdel Jalil

Announcing Libyan law will be based on Sharia in the post-Qadhafi era, October 23, 2011

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Report Prepared by Kronos Principal Michael S. Smith II

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GENESIS

The U.S.S.R. invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Perhaps ironically, Qadhafi, who sensed the Soviet advance into Islamic territory might present him an opportunity to leverage a leadership role in the Muslim world, reportedly encouraged Libyans to participate in the ensuing “Afghan Jihad.”¹ Of course, Qadhafi would also later become one of the Soviet Union’s biggest arms clients.²

Several small groups of Libyan jihadis mobilized mostly unremarkable confrontations with the Qadhafi regime during the 1980s. A coup attempt in 1984 was led by an organization much less focused on martyrdom than nationalistic concerns, the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL). Meanwhile, Libyan jihadis’ penchants for radical Islam reflected a growing trend in the greater Arab world that was bolstered by a regional Islamic awakening known as “al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya.”

Among the more esteemed extremist groups operating in Libya at this time was a secretive jihadist organization formed by Awatha al-Zuwawi. A student of Islamic law, al-Zuwawi briefly participated in the Afghan Jihad in 1986. While in Afghanistan al-Zuwawi met with Islamic Union Movement leader Shaykh Abd al-Rasul Sayyaf, establishing a relationship that future LIFG leaders would utilize when they traveled to South Asia to fight the Soviets.³ (Note: A mentor of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and an associate of Usama bin Laden, Abd al-Rasul Sayyaf is today one of the most influential law makers in Afghanistan.)

In 2005, former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group Shura (Advisory) Council member and Afghan Jihad veteran Noman Bin Othman (aka Abu Tamama Al-Libi) explained, “Most of the founding leaders and cadres of the Fighting Group were members of the secretive organization formed

by Zuwawi, in 1982.⁴ Sami al-Saadi (aka Abu Munther al-Saadi, aka Abu Munthir, aka Abu al-Mundhir, aka Shaykh Yusuf) is among the jihadis affiliated with Zuwawi's group who established the LIFG. (It is likely Zuwawi's group was named al-l'tisam.)

Along with several other LIFG founders, al-Saadi left Libya in 1988 to participate in the Afghan Jihad. Al-Saadi and other LIFG founders who arrived in South Asia at this time quickly established relationships with the mujahidin's top personalities. Upon his release from prison in Libya in 2010, the LIFG's deputy emir, Khalid al-Sharif (aka Abu Hazim al-Libi, aka Abu Hazim, aka Abu Hazem, aka Muhammad Dawood, aka Dawood, aka Ayyub al-Libi, aka Abd al-Wahid), noted his friendship with Usama bin Laden began following their first meeting in 1988.⁵

It has been estimated some 500 Libyans participated in the anti-communist insurgency in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1992.⁶ During this time, most of the LIFG's founders visited Shaykh Sayyaf's guesthouse in Peshawar, Pakistan.⁷ According to Noman bin Othman, Jalaluddin Haqqani commanded many of the Libyans who joined the Afghan Jihad.

In 1990, Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah al-Muqatilah fi-Libya — known in the West as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) — was formed in Afghanistan by mujahidin who fought the Soviets.⁸ LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi says the LIFG's core membership consisted of members of al-Zuwawi's jihadist organization.⁹

The LIFG's first emir was Abd al-Salam al-Douadi (aka, Abd al-Salam al-Dwawi, aka Abd al-Ghaffar, aka Abdul Ghaffar al-Douadi).¹⁰ Other senior members of the group who arrived in Afghanistan in the late 1980s to fight the Soviets included: Abd al-Hakim al-Masir Belhadj al-Khuwayladi (aka Abd al-Hakim Balhaj, aka Abdallah al-Sadeq, aka Abu Abdallah al-Sadeq, aka Abu Abdallah al-Libi, aka Abu Abd Allah al-Sadiq, aka Jamal Kaderi, aka Abdul al-Nabi, and possibly Omar Rashed), who becomes the group's third and final emir in 1995; Ali Ammar Ashur al-Raqiai (aka Abu Laith al-Libi), who later becomes an al-Qa'ida field commander (killed in a drone strike in Pakistan in January 2008); Salah Fathi Ben Sulaiman (aka

Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Hattab), one of the group's prominent leaders who is killed in the clashes in the eastern Libyan city Derna in 1997; Abd al-Wahab al-Qayid (aka Abu Idriss), who is the elder brother of Core al-Qa'ida Sharia official and LIFG member Abu Yahya al-Libi; Jamal Ibrahim Ashtiwi al Misrati (aka Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, aka Atiyatallah), who reportedly rose to the number two spot in al-Qa'ida in 2011 (killed in a drone strike in Pakistan in August 2011); Khalid al-Sharif, who later becomes the LIFG's deputy emir; LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi; and, Noman bin Othman, who is now a senior analyst focused on strategic communication and de-radicalization at a think tank in London.

The LIFG's founders were focused on a goal with certain parallels to the one they would help achieve in Afghanistan: Regime change. Specifically, they sought to deliver the demise of the "apostate" Qadhafi regime in Libya in order to create an Islamic state.

Although small, the LIFG quickly developed a reputation for producing highly-skilled and markedly disciplined fighters. The group was also one of the first to incorporate theology into the training provided at its camps in Afghanistan, bringing in preachers from the Gulf to nourish militants with religious studies.¹¹

Former LIFG member Noman bin Othman says the LIFG was largely formed in camps situated near Nangarhar, Afghanistan. In 2005, bin Othman explained the group was trained "in all types of guerrilla warfare. We trained on weapons, tactics, enemy engagement techniques and survival in hostile environments. All weapons training was with live ammunition, which was available everywhere. ... There were ex-military people amongst the mujahidin, but no formal state forces participated. We were also trained by the elite units of the Afghan Mujahidin who had themselves been trained by Pakistani Special Forces, the CIA and the British SAS."¹²

One account of the group's history by investigative journalist Camille Tawil that became popular among jihadis notes, "The LIFG's best known camp was Selman Al-Farisi's camp in Pakistan, in a tribal area called Gandao on the border with Afghanistan. The camp was operated

under the supervision of the Islamic Union led by Abd al-Rasul Sayyaf.¹³ Meanwhile, the LIFG ran other camps inside Afghanistan, notably in Jalalabad. Tawil's account adds: "individuals who joined the LIFG after its founding were fighting alongside the Islamic Party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and some members of the LIFG graduated from the al-Qa'ida camps in Khost."

LIFG member Muhammad Ali Abd al-Aziz al-Fakhri (aka Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi) trained at the Khaldan camp, which he later led until his capture soon after 9/11.¹⁴ In classified detainee assessments, JTF-GTMO analysts have asserted that most LIFG fighters fought with bin Laden during the conflict and trained at the UBL-sponsored Torkham Camp on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Discussing the group's history, Noman bin Othman, who took part in the battles in Afghanistan, explained: "The LIFG was working on many fronts in Afghanistan in collaboration with the Islamic Union. The LIFG opened many fronts in Afghanistan: Kandahar, Jalalabad, Kama, and Khost, but the Gardez Front was the most important one because the LIFG was running five or six sites there, two of which were located directly on the front lines and were made up of Libyan fighters only. One of these front sites was the Sati Condo front which supervised Gardez itself."¹⁵ Like many of the Arab Afghan groups, the LIFG also had a substantial presence in Peshawar, Pakistan during this time.

LIFG fighters participated in the battle for Khost, Afghanistan, which the mujahidin claimed in March of 1991. Next, they participated in the battle for Gardez that lasted through early 1992. The fall of Gardez to the mujahidin is widely regarded as the event which shuttered the authority of the Soviet-aligned regime that was still ruling Afghanistan.¹⁶

The LIFG's ranks in Afghanistan were comprised of only several hundred militants in 1992. With the fall of Gardez, the LIFG deployed some of its members to Libya to establish cells for future operations inside the country.¹⁷ Others, including Abu Yahya al-Libi, were sent to Mauritania for religious training.¹⁸

Ashur al-Shamis, who was once a prominent member

of the anti-Qadhafi NFSL, recalled that the young LIFG members who returned to Libya in the early 1990s were a militarily well-trained and emotionally charged group. Still, they lacked a clearly defined military or political program. Shamis said that for several years LIFG members collected weapons and recruited members, which included members of the Libyan police and military. It seems their ties with members of the military yielded opportunities to gather weaponry during raids on security stations that proved difficult for authorities to investigate.¹⁹

The group's primary support bases within Libya were the Sanusiyya-affiliated communities in the eastern region, chiefly Derna and Benghazi. For more than a century, this area of the country had been a stronghold of conservative Muslims.

Eastern Libya's present day Islamist legacy appears to have begun in 1853, when Algerian-born 19th Century Islamic revivalist leader Sayyid Muhammad Ibn al-Sanusi established his zawiya (place of learning) at Giarabub (Jaghbub). Educated in Islamic Sufism at Fez and Islamic orthodoxy at Mecca, al-Sanusi's teachings famously attracted students to Libya from across North Africa and Arabia. He established a religious order known as the Sanusiyya, which was heavily influenced by the fundamentalist Wahhabi order of Saudi Arabia.²⁰ Following the death of al-Sanusi in 1859, the Sanusiyya evolved from a religious brotherhood into a political and commercial enterprise with military support from the Bedouins of Libya's interior and acceptance from the Ottoman Turks who ruled from Libya's coast. Al-Sanusi's son Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi increased the number of Sanusi lodges throughout southern Libya and northern Chad, thereby expanding his filial influence over merchants and the faithful.²¹ Later, after decades of brutal Italian rule, Libya was captured by the French and British during the North African campaigns of World War II. The Sanusiyya's authority was restored when Sayyid Muhammad Ibn al-Sanusi's grandson, Idris Muhammad al-Sanusi, became king of the United Kingdom of Libya on December 24, 1951. King Idris was deposed during the military coup led by Commander (later Colonel) Qadhafi in 1969.

Both documents seized in Sinjar, Iraq in 2007 and a leaked U.S. diplomatic cable from 2008 reveal the eastern region of Libya had remained a breeding ground for violent extremism despite the Qadhafi regime's efforts to smother Islamist movements. According to the documents discovered in Sinjar, Libyans represented the second-largest group of foreign fighters entering Iraq. Derna provided the greatest number of Libyans who travelled to Iraq to support the anti-Coalition insurgency, with Benghazi contributing the second-largest group.²² The importance of these cities to jihadi elements was also emphasized in the November 2007 announcement regarding the LIFG's ties to al-Qa'ida issued by Ayman al-Zawahiri and LIFG Shura Council member Abu Laith al-Libi. In this message, which has widely — and perhaps erroneously — been construed as an announcement of the LIFG's merger with al-Qa'ida, al-Libi proclaimed: "It is with the grace of God that we were hoisting the banner of jihad against this apostate regime under the leadership of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which sacrificed the elite of its sons and commanders in combating this regime whose blood was spilled on the mountains of Darnah, the streets of Benghazi, the outskirts of Tripoli, the desert of Sabha, and the sands of the beach."²³

Several militant Islamist groups existed in Libya at the time of the LIFG's inception. Yet the LIFG stood out due to its efforts to bring many such groups under one banner, establishing a unified front of fighters to depose the Qadhafi regime. While the LIFG ostensibly failed to achieve this goal, this objective may be seen to reflect the influence of a prominent Saudi jihadi who, while in Sudan during the early 1990s, began working to unite militant Islamist groups under the banner of what we now know as al-Qa'ida. The LIFG also stood out from other jihadi organizations based in Libya because it had an international web of members spread from South Asia to the Middle East, and from North and East Africa to Europe.

By the conclusion of the Afghan Jihad LIFG members were closely linked with the Taliban's top leadership in Afghanistan, and various prominent LIFG members were intertwined with the global jihadi network being built by

Usama bin Laden. And when the Pakistanis pressured many Arabs to leave the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions they inhabited in 1993, senior LIFG figures like Belhadj were among the LIFG members who traveled to Sudan to continue their training, enjoying Usama bin Laden's hospitality during their stay.

During the 1990s, the LIFG's efforts to remove Qadhafi from power proved as futile as Qadhafi's efforts to exploit the Afghan Jihad. The LIFG managed to sustain its confrontations with the regime for several years, and the atmosphere in Libya was ripe for the cultivation of jihadists, particularly in the country's eastern cities. Yet Qadhafi's iron-fisted autocratic rule made it difficult for most any organization with an Islamist — let alone an anti-regime modus operandi — to flourish in Libya.

Based on Noman bin Othman's accounts and statements issued by the group during the mid-1990s, the LIFG was narrowly focused on delivering regime change in Libya versus waging the sort of global jihad against "apostate" interests that was to be pursued by al-Qa'ida. While the LIFG sent fighters to support the GIA's jihad in Algeria during the mid-90s, their prerogative in supporting the GIA's efforts to establish an Islamic state in Algeria was strategically tied to the LIFG's focus on neighboring Libya: The creation of an Islamic state in Algeria by jihadis who LIFG members fought alongside of during the Afghan Jihad might have lent the LIFG a stable base from which to launch attacks on the Qadhafi regime. As Noman bin Othman put it, "We could not ignore what was happening in Algeria, which we could have used as a starting point to move to Libya: a leap from Afghanistan to Algeria then to Libya."

Politically, helping the GIA must have also seemed a prudent move for LIFG leaders who were enjoying bin Laden's support in Sudan. The GIA's establishment had been encouraged years earlier by bin Laden's son-in-law Abdelkrim Gharzouli (aka Kari Saïd, aka Qari Said) during a meeting of "Afghan Arabs" in Peshawar, and Gharzouli was a passionate supporter of their cause.²⁴ What's more, bin Laden reportedly offered to compensate the LIFG \$50,000 for each member killed on the battlefield.²⁵ Bin

Laden also reportedly sought to dissuade the LIFG from leveraging its resources to initiate an insurgency within Libya, viewing Qadhafi as a prospective ally for his plans to counter U.S. interests in the Middle East.

The LIFG deployed more than a dozen of its best fighters to assist the GIA. According to a letter he sent to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, LIFG member Jamal Ibrahim Ashtiwi al Misrati (aka Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, aka Atiyatallah), who eventually became a high-ranking al-Qa'ida figure and confidant of bin Laden, was also present in Algeria during this time.²⁶ Indeed, Noman bin Othman says al-Rahman was jailed in Algeria and handed a death sentence in a fatwa issued by Hassan Hattab, a member of the GIA who became the first leader of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).²⁷

Yet by 1996 the LIFG's ties to the GIA had dissolved after the group killed LIFG members and other militants trained at camps affiliated with Usama bin Laden's network in Afghanistan and Sudan. Several of the issues which manifest the rift between the GIA and the LIFG — notably the GIA leader's decision to target civilians — appear to have motivated various GIA officials to organize the GSPC, which is now known as al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb.²⁸ Coordinated by Abu Musab al-Suri, who later becomes known as the architect of "al-Qa'ida 2.0," the LIFG took part in a declaration of renunciations of the GIA's practices in 1996.²⁹

Although Algerian Afghan Jihad veterans were quick to take up arms against the regime in Algeria due to the military's decision to remove Islamists from office and block them from seizing control of the government in 1992, the LIFG did not intend to engage the Qadhafi regime at this time.

According to Noman bin Othman, rather than challenging the Qadhafi regime with a persistent wave of small-scale attacks, the LIFG envisioned positioning in Libya a sizeable base of members and resources to launch the sort of large-scale, decisive operations that might force Qadhafi from power. However, this grand plan was scuttled by an unexpected turn of events in June of 1995.

In his reviews of the LIFG's early operations in Libya,

Noman bin Othman laments an "amateurish" and "rogue" mission to free Khalid Baqchiche as an error that would substantially alter the group's plans. A member of the LIFG, Baqchiche had been injured during clashes with security forces and was being held in a Benghazi hospital under armed supervision.³⁰ The decision to rescue Baqchiche was unilaterally made by the LIFG's emir for the eastern region of Libya, Sa'ad Ramadan al-Farjani (aka Waheed), who was a member of the LIFG's Shura Council.³¹

Libyan authorities were likely alarmed to discover that the group's safe house and training facility at a farm near Benghazi was supervised by Saleh al-Sh-hibi. A first lieutenant in the Libyan Army, al-Sh-hibi blew himself up with a grenade during the confrontation with authorities who discovered this base while pursuing the LIFG members who helped free Baqchiche.

According to Noman bin Othman, "The security forces were able to catch the elements of the group that had carried out the rescue operation. Waheed, accompanied by two leaders, Shaykh Abu Yahya (aka Salih Abd al-Sayid al-Maghribi, group founder) and Abu Shadad (aka Rajab Arafa), traveled to Oum Al-Razm, located 300 km east of Benghazi, and remained there. A chase was launched to find Waheed and he was found in the house of Brother Abu Shadad. The three Brothers died as martyrs following a clash with the security services."³² Authorities also discovered documents which shed light on the LIFG's presence across several regions in Libya.

Bin Othman asserts the rescue operation was the event that firmly placed the LIFG on the Qadhafi regime's radar. In 2005, he said this discovery "destroyed everything that we had planned and developed over the years."³³

This certainly provoked Qadhafi's campaign against the group, effectively derailing the LIFG's plan to covertly establish a network inside Libya capable of sustaining an insurgency led by a large, well-positioned group of fighters. Yet previous events are likely to have offered the regime some awareness of the LIFG's presence, possibly even its larger aspirations.

In 1992, LIFG emir Abd Al-Salam al-Douadi was arrested by Egyptian authorities and handed over to

Libya.³⁴ Then, on March 10, 1994, several men assassinated German counter-terrorism intelligence official Silvan Becker and his wife near Sirte, Libya. This latter incident served as the basis for the first Interpol warrant for the arrest of Usama bin Laden, which was issued from Tripoli years later on March 16, 1998. Along with bin Laden, the warrant named three other suspects who are believed to have been members of the LIFG: Faraj Hasan Husein al-Shibli (aka Faraj al-Chalabi), Faraj Mikhail Abdul Fadeel Jibril al-Alwan, and Faez Abu Zeid Muftah al-Warfali.^{35, 36}

By 1994 several high-profile members of the LIFG were present in Sudan, including Abu Anas al-Libi, who later plays a central role in the 1998 attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Abu Anas al-Libi is likely the brother of LIFG Shura Council member, later al-Qa'ida member Abu Laith al-Libi (killed in 2008). Noman bin Othman was among the Arab Afghans who departed South Asia for Sudan the same year. He says the LIFG had already established "infrastructure" in Khartoum prior to his arrival.³⁷ And it was from Sudan that the LIFG deployed more than a dozen of its top fighters to support the GIA's efforts in Algeria.³⁸

A 2004 report presented to the UN Security Council by Libya's delegation states: "Bin Laden worked in coordination with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group on the planning and execution of terrorist operations, which included attempts to bring in weapons across the Libyan border and deliver them to Algerian elements belonging to the Algerian Armed Islamic Group [GIA]."³⁹ Yet according to Noman bin Othman, Usama bin Laden refused to carry out any operations inside Libya or against Qadhafi, who bin Laden considered a logical prospective ally for future operations targeting American interests in the Middle East. Bin Othman claims that bin Laden decided Libya should act as "a rear front to the jihad in other countries like Algeria and Egypt."⁴⁰ And it has been reported that bin Laden at one point demanded the LIFG halt its operations in Libya and cease its propaganda campaigns focused on shaping resentment toward the Qadhafi regime.⁴¹

Weeks after the June 1995 rescue operation at the Benghazi hospital, the LIFG conducted a daring operation

in which it freed Islamists held in a prison near Benghazi.⁴² Then, in September 1995, fierce clashes took place between Islamist militants and security forces in Benghazi.

Leaked JTF-GTMO assessments of Guantanamo Bay detainees believed to be members of the LIFG who participated in the insurgency in Libya during the 1990s indicate the group coordinated travel to Sudan for members targeted by the Qadhafi regime. For instance, the assessment of Omar Khalif Mohammed Abu Bakr Mahjoub (aka Omar Khalif Mohammed Abu Bakr Mahjoub, aka Abu Umar al-Libi, aka Umar the Bedouin, aka Abu Umar al-Baydawi, aka Awad Uwayshah al-Barasi, aka Awad Khalifah Muhammad, aka Abu Bakr Abu Uwayshah al-Barasi, aka Abu Aysha, aka Ali al-Baydawi, aka Safir, aka al-Maqlub), who joined the LIFG in Libya in 1992, notes the LIFG smuggled him to Khartoum, Sudan after he became wanted by the regime. Mahjoub claims LIFG emir Belhadj then secured a job for him overseeing drivers at Usama bin Laden's Wadi bin al-Aqiq holding company. Mahjoub received additional weapons and explosives training in Sudan, and went on to become an explosives instructor at camps in Afghanistan, and, following 9/11, he joined a special unit organized by Abu Zubayda to target Western forces with IEDs.

Realizing linkages existed between the events in Libya and bin Laden's support for the jihad in neighboring Algeria, Qadhafi soon contacted Sudanese authorities to demand the expulsion of Libyan jihadis. According to Noman bin Othman, Libyan intelligence agents provided Sudanese officials a list of 55 people of interest to the Qadhafi regime. Bin Othman added that while the Sudanese authorities denied the Libyans were present in the country — they likely had a hard time identifying them in the first place due to their uses of aliases — and invited the Qadhafi regime to send agents to Sudan to investigate, authorities conveyed a message to the LIFG's known members that they should leave the country. Bin Othman's accounts indicate many LIFG members left Sudan in October 1995.⁴³

In his testimony regarding al-Qa'ida's operations in Sudan during the 1990s provided during the 1998 U.S.

Embassy bombings trial, Sudanese al-Qa'ida member Jamal Ahmed al-Fadl testified that the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group was one of several groups affiliated with al-Qa'ida. Al-Fadl advised the following members of the LIFG also belonged to al-Qa'ida: Saif al-Libi (identified as the group's emir by al-Fadl), Abu Jaffar al-Libi, Abu Anas al-Libi, Hamzallah al-Libi, Abu Abdel Qader al-Libi, and Hamas al-Libi.⁴⁴

According to testimony provided in the Embassy bombings trial by al-Qa'ida member L'Houssaine Kherchtou, less than 20 members of al-Qa'ida present in Sudan at this time were from Libya. Kherchtou recalled: "there was a pressure from the Libyan government on the Sudanese government that all the Libyans must leave the country, and they informed Usama bin Laden that if you have some Libyans you have to let them get out from the country. And Usama bin Laden informed these guys and he told them that 'You have to leave, because if you don't leave, you will be responsible for yourselves, and if somebody caught you, I am not responsible. What I can do for you is I can give you twenty-four hundred bucks, plus a ticket with you and your wife if you want to live somewhere.' But the Libyans, most of them, they refused the offer of Usama Bin Laden. They were very upset and angry because [bin Laden] couldn't protect them, and they had a meeting ... At the end of the meeting they gave a letter to Usama bin Laden that [said] they are leaving al Qaeda, and they took that money and tickets and some of them they left. Some of them they joined the Libyan Islamic [Fighting] Group."⁴⁵

The leaked JTF-GTMO assessment of LIFG military committee member Omar Khalif Mohammed Abu Bakr Mahjoub contains several important details about the LIFG's departure from Sudan. According to Mahjoub, LIFG emir Belhadj gathered him with seven to nine other individuals, had this group swear bayat (allegiance) to the LIFG, and then put them on a plane to Jalalabad, Afghanistan. En route to Jalalabad, the plane stopped in the United Arab Emirates, where LIFG member Hamza Zubayr met the plane. Along with Abu Faraj al-Libi, Hamza Zubayr was an instructor at key al-Qa'ida- and LIFG-

affiliated camps in Afghanistan. He was also part of a special terrorist team deployed to attack targets in Karachi. He was killed during a raid in September 2002.

In his testimony, L'Houssaine Kherchtou advised a Libyan al-Qa'ida affiliate known as "Abu Derdaa" was the only Libyan who remained in Sudan. It is possible "Abu Derdaa" is Abu Sufian Ibrahim Ahmed Hamuda bin Qumu, a Libyan member of al-Qa'ida from the eastern Libyan city Derna. According to the leaked 2008 JTF-GTMO Detainee Assessment for Ashraf Salim Abd al-Salam, a Libyan al-Qa'ida member captured alongside Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi in December 2001 who is assessed to have been a member of the LIFG's military committee during the 1990s, bin Qumu provided al-Salam a place to live when he first arrived in Khartoum in 1995. Al-Salam was forced to leave Sudan in June of 1995. He then returned to Sudan in 1996, and lived with bin Qumu through 1997.

Bin Qumu was a member of the Libyan military who was imprisoned for murder, assault, and narcotics distribution. He escaped from prison in 1993 and fled Libya. The Libyan government reported to the U.S. that bin Qumu later became an LIFG military commander. He joined the Taliban in 1998. Prior to his capture, he also reportedly served as Usama bin Laden's driver. Bin Qumu was detained by the Pakistani police following 9/11 pursuant to their receipt of a tip provided by Libya. The Pakistanis handed bin Qumu over to the U.S., which transferred bin Qumu to Libya on September 28, 2007. He was released from prison by the Qadhafi regime on August 31, 2010.⁴⁶ The Wall Street Journal reported in April of 2011 that bin Qumu was training rebel fighters in Derna.⁴⁷ An assessment of bin Qumu prior to his extradition depicted him as a medium to high risk militant who was "likely to pose a threat to the US, its interests and allies."

Based on bin Othman's claim that Abu Anas al-Libi severed his ties with al-Qa'ida in 1995 to join the LIFG, it would seem that Abu Anas al-Libi was among those angered by bin Laden's decision.⁴⁸ According to L'Houssaine Kherchtou, Abu Anas al-Libi briefly remained in Sudan before travelling to Qatar. He was granted asylum in Britain soon thereafter.⁴⁹ Noman bin Othman also found

refuge in Britain. Asked why he elected to move to Britain, bin Othman replied: "There were few other suitable destinations at that time."⁵⁰

The first official external LIFG communiqué is dated October 18, 1995. In it, the LIFG announced its existence in Libya, claiming responsibility for clashes between security forces and militant Islamists that had taken place in Libya since June. The group also declared jihad against the Qadhafi regime:

Praised be Allah, Master of the worlds, and prayer and peace be upon the Lord of messengers, our lord Muhammad, and upon all of his family and companions;

The LIFG proclaims its activity in order to fulfill the duty of Jihad in the way of Allah the Exalted and move the worshippers out of worshipping the worshippers and into the worship of the Lord of worshippers, from the narrowness of this world to the vastness of the Hereafter, and from the oppression of religions to the justice of Islam.

Then it was time for the LIFG to leave the state of secrecy and go to a state of publicity, due to the delicate stage that the Jihadi activity in Libya was going through.

Moreover, the LIFG proclaims that it is responsible for the blessed Jihadi actions that broke out since the month of Muharram in 1416 Hijri (Namely, June 1995 A.D.) in all of the areas of Libya.

Truly, confronting the tyrants of this age — the like of Qadhafi — has become the most necessary duty after the belief in Allah the Exalted, so that the Sharia (Islamic law) of Allah the Mighty and Supreme may rule, and so that the Muslims in Libya will enjoy their lives under the protection of this divine way and be rid of the subjugation, oppression and tyranny that they used to suffer for more than four centuries under this oppressing age.

The elimination of this kind of heretic regime and the deliverance of the Muslim Libyan people from their suffering could not have been done without wound and pain, casualties and material losses, but all the goodness is in acting by this divine decree. Allah the Exalted said: "Jihad is ordained for you (Muslims) though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and

that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know" [Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 216].

The LIFG directs its call to the Muslim Libyan people to renew the repentance to Allah the Exalted and to straighten up in His way, and to obligate themselves to His rules, and to separate themselves from this heretic regime that has renounced the religion of Allah the Exalted, subjugated the people, encroached upon their rights and wished to destroy all the values and principles they had.

Moreover, the LIFG calls to the Muslim people, upon whose territory a battle broke out between true and false, between the worshippers of The Merciful and the supporters of The Devil, until they will assume their place in this battle next to the Mujahidin and not next to the tyrant oppressors.

And a full greeting in every sense of brotherhood, affection, mutual support and friendship is sent to all the Mujahid factions that came in the defense of Islam and the oppressed among the Muslims anywhere in our Islamic world, in order to return to our nation its glory and fame and to take vengeance on those who have hurt its honor and sold its sacred things.

We pledge ourselves before Allah the Blessed and Exalted to walk the path of blessed Jihad until the tyranny will fall and the religion of Allah the Mighty and Supreme will rise, and on that day the believers will rejoice in the triumph of Allah.

LIFG — General Policy:

A Muslim group that prepares itself to fight the enemies of Allah the Exalted and the first among them — the tyrants that rule without ordain from Allah — so that there will not be any discord and the religion will be entirely to Allah.

The faith, the comprehension and the manner: The ideology of the Sunna and the venerable forefathers among the companions and their followers and those who follow them by doing good — all of whom followed the indication of the sign in faith or in practice, alongside focusing upon the comprehension of reality in order to implement the rule of Allah upon it.

The goal and the target: Pleasing Allah the Mighty and Supreme and acting to raise His religion and to give Him a firm position on earth.

The means: Following the decree of Allah the Exalted to do Jihad on His behalf and invoking Him by means of a group with a leader and a commitment to listen, obey and fight.

Method of action:

-Preparing the people thoroughly.

-Benefiting from the principle of secrecy in action according to what the legal interest dictates.

-Spreading awareness and spirit of Jihad and inciting the believers to fight.

-Standing in support and friendship towards all the fighting factions wherever they are.

-Not trusting any oppressing authority and relying, beside Allah the Exalted, upon independent resources in funding the Jihadi process, and Allah gives the success.

Thursday, 25th of Jumada Al-'ula, 1416 Hijri — corresponding to the 18th of October, 1995 A.D.⁵¹

In one posting on the LIFG's website, the group noted the decision to go public was made in response to the killing of Shura Council member and group founder Shaykh Abu Yahya following the operation to recover LIFG member Baqchiche from a Benghazi hospital.⁵² According to various accounts, the decision to go public was also made due to concerns the NFSL or other groups might attempt either to claim credit for the group's activities or try to discredit the group as an entity created by the Qadhafi regime to scare European officials.

As noted above, the NFSL had failed to depose Qadhafi in a coup attempt in 1984. The organization's military capabilities were considerably depleted thereafter. Despite such setbacks, the organization continued to oppose the regime, mostly raising support from abroad. Previously an influential member of the NFSL, Ashur

al-Shamis says he contacted LIFG officials who were living abroad in London to try to dissuade the group from going public in October 1995.⁵³

In February 1996, Islamist militants attempted to assassinate Qadhafi near Sirte, killing several of his bodyguards.⁵⁴ In the group's third communiqué dated March 6, 1996 and titled "Assassination Attempt on Qadhafi in Sirte," LIFG emir Belhadj claimed the LIFG was responsible for the attack.⁵⁵

Former British intelligence officer David Shayler later alleged the British government, still angry over Qadhafi's role in the 1988 bombing of PanAm Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, was involved with this assassination attempt. Although his allegations have not been confirmed, a top-secret MI6 document leaked on the Internet in 2000 revealed British intelligence knew of an assassination plot in 1995 that involved five colonels, Libyan students, and "Libya veterans who served in Afghanistan."⁵⁶ (In its thirteenth communiqué that was issued in August 1998, the LIFG's political bureau denied that the LIFG had collaborated with the British.⁵⁷ The LIFG refuted the allegations again at length in its fifteenth communiqué issued in December 1999, in which the LIFG's political bureau firmly denied a relationship existed between British intelligence and the group.⁵⁸)

Shayler's claims were bolstered by evidence that British authorities ostensibly elected to allow LIFG members living in the U.K. to engage in an array of support for the LIFG, from producing and distributing propaganda to raising funds. Abu Anas al-Libi, an LIFG and al-Qa'ida member who enjoyed asylum in Britain during mid- to late-1990s, was not bothered by the authorities until May of 2000. This, despite evidence collected by the U.S. that indicated he played a central role in the U.S. Embassy bombings in East Africa in 1998. (Britain did not designate the LIFG a terrorist organization until October 2005.)

Late in March of 1996, several hundred prisoners reportedly escaped from Kuwaifiya prison near Benghazi. Members of the LIFG were said to be among the group, which fled to the outskirts of Derna where clashes with security forces soon erupted. Qadhafi deployed helicopter

gunships to Benghazi to confront militants involved in the prison break, cut telephone, electricity, and water supplies to Derna, and famously claimed that the militants “deserve to die without trial, like dogs.”⁵⁹

A Western diplomat working in Libya noted Qadhafi’s claim that the growing unrest in Libya was led by foreign groups was “no longer plausible.”⁶⁰ Discussing the blockade established around Derna, another European diplomat stated: “If the fundamentalist phenomenon is not so visible throughout Libya it is gaining ground and especially in the northeast.” The diplomat then explained that the growth of militant Islam in eastern Libya was likely linked to the sense of marginalization common among the region’s residents. Libyan authorities reported a clash had occurred between police and drug traffickers in Benghazi, but did not mention confrontations with Islamists.

In its fourth and fifth communiqués, LIFG emir Belhadj indicated the group was involved in these clashes. He noted the LIFG killed and injured several high-ranking security officials. The group also seized weapons and a substantial sum of money.^{61, 62}

The LIFG launched several marketing vehicles during the 1990s, including its official website, *almuqatila.com*. In May of 1996, copies of the LIFG’s publication titled *Al Fajr* were circulated. *Al Fajr* provided an address in Denmark for the group.⁶³ Contributors included such high-profile jihadis as Abu Musab al-Suri.⁶⁴ A Syrian-born jihadist who spent much of the 1990s living in London, al-Suri would become one of al-Qa’ida’s foremost post-9/11 strategists prior to his capture in Pakistan in 2005.⁶⁵ Discussing al-Suri’s contributions to *Al Fajr*, in 2006 Noman bin Othman said he mostly wrote “theoretical stuff” that was focused on long-range strategic issues, using an alias other than Abu Musab al-Suri.⁶⁶

Leaflets in which the LIFG claimed responsibility for attacks and clashes with security services also appeared in Libya. And around this time LIFG emir Abd al-Hakim Belhadj issued provocative statements that were posted to the popular jihadi web forum *Al-Tawhed Wal-Jihad*.^{67, 68} In a statement issued in 1996, he vowed to fight “all the

deviant groups that call for democracy or fight for the sake of it.”⁶⁹

The LIFG is said to have been involved with the bloody riots at the notorious Abu Salim prison that culminated with the Qadhafi regime killing some 1,200 prisoners on June 26, 1996. LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi lost two brothers during the massacre.⁷⁰ Qadhafi denied the slaughter had occurred until 2004.⁷¹

In October 1996, LIFG spokesman Abu Bakr al-Sharif issued the following remarks during an interview with an Islamist magazine: “There is no doubt that the tragic situation which is hurting Libyan society is not hidden from any person with even the least concern for the situation of the Muslim. So, the absence of the Islamic regime — which is a guarantor for the achievement of a salvation and peace in this world and the next — is what brought us to the situation. Qadhafi, as a ruler who has been forced over the necks of the Muslims in Libya in order to achieve the interests of the enemies of our Nation, has fulfilled the role which has been expected from him to the letter. This role required him to break the rules of Islam and its symbols within the minds of people and everyday lives.”⁷²

Asked to briefly define the LIFG’s agenda, al-Sharif revealed the “legal and ideological direction” of the LIFG “is in the book of Allah Most High and Exalted, and the Sunnah of His Messenger ...” He added that the LIFG’s ideology relies on the direction of “Jihad and the changing of the regimes which are sitting on the chests of our Ummah against our will ... The LIFG views the current regimes in our countries as an enemy which has the attributes of apostasy, puppets, and war against the religion approved by Allah.”

Regarding the LIFG’s achievements, al-Sharif noted that the LIFG was striving to eschew Qadhafi’s corrupt version of Islam: “The most important achievement of the LIFG is the bringing back to life an overlooked requirement and a dead Sunnah. I mean that through the fight against the apostates and the traitors, it also revived the hope — with the help of Allah — in the spirits which had been overcome with the hopelessness and fear which had been

created by the regime through entrenched means. For this reason, the popular sentiments of the people have become clear on the side of the LIFG, and this is exemplified in the offer of information with respect to the movements of the regime, or the offer of different types of help to the mujahidin. Furthermore, the LIFG has shown the true face of the fight, that it is a creedal fight between truth and falsehood, and these are the first steps in the path of correct change ...”

Discussing the Qadhafi regime’s crackdown on the LIFG, al-Sharif explained: “The regime is currently living in a situation of hysteria which I do not think it has ever faced at any previous time. For this reason, [Qadhafi] is gathering all that he owns of military and security might to annihilate the LIFG. Libyans have not bombed their own country since the Italian occupation of Libya. However, we are watching the Libyan air force bombarding the mujahidin positions in the Green Mountain area which was a gathering place for the Libyan mujahidin who fought against the Italian occupation. This area is today one of the many strong points of the LIFG. Meantime, Qadhafi attempts to conceal from the public the reality of these clashes by claiming his raids are part of an offensive on drug traffickers. Presently, he has amassed 10,000 troops in the region, including Serbian troops from the former Yugoslavia.” He added that Qadhafi had, “also established two new missions being led by Colonels Abu Bakr Yunus and Mustafa al-Kharouby, who are members in the Qadhafi revolutionary leadership. Most recently, they introduced the cleansing committees — as they call them — to subdue the breaths of the sympathizers of the LIFG, and to tighten the grip around them ...” (Note: Abu Bakr Yunus was killed in the air strike on Qadhafi’s convoy that led to his capture by rebel forces in October 2011.)

Asked about how the group had been received by secular oppositionist groups from Libya, al-Sharif stated: “It never occurred to the secular groups that a Muslim Jama’a can lead armed opposition in this manner. ... so they attempted to belittle the achievements of the LIFG initially. However, when they saw the LIFG beginning to

gain prominence quickly on the Libyan scene, they attempted to contain the LIFG through various means ... they had imagined the LIFG was merely a group of armed people capable of doing nothing other than firing bullets, and that LIFG is in need of political cover so that they could take advantage of our military operations. I would say to them and to every person who thinks in this way: ‘You have made a mistake.’ ... As for the stance of the LIFG with respect to these secularists, it has been revealed on more than one occasion through the words of the leaders of the LIFG, briefly this stance: ‘They are gathering under the banner of Kufr and Jahilia (ignorance), because they are established on the principles of secularism and the separation of religion from government.’”

The LIFG carried out its second attempt to assassinate Qadhafi in 1996 on November 23. In the LIFG’s eighth communiqué, LIFG emir Belhadj reported LIFG member and Afghan Jihad veteran Muhammad Abdallah al-Qiriyu (aka Abdallah Radwan) threw a hand grenade at Qadhafi’s feet when he exited his car in Barak.⁷³ However, the grenade did not detonate, and Qadhafi escaped unharmed.⁷⁴

About a month after the LIFG claimed responsibility for this second failed assassination attempt the Qadhafi regime submitted an official protest memorandum to Britain. The regime criticized officials for allowing fundamentalists who opposed the Qadhafi regime to operate freely within its borders. The memorandum noted Britain was sheltering elements of a terrorist group who were wanted in Libya.⁷⁵

According to a report in the group’s magazine *Al Fajr*, in April 1997 the LIFG stormed a military post in Libya, seizing 100 machine guns for use in future operations.⁷⁶

On May 31, 1997, the LIFG published a letter of support to Omar Abd al-Rahman (aka the Blind Sheikh), who was convicted of seditious conspiracy for his involvement in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center. In this letter published on the LIFG’s website, LIFG emir Belhadj warned the “tyrant Americans” to take heed of the growing anger among Muslims:

Praised be Allah, Master of the Worlds, and the end is (best) for the righteous, and no hostility but to the oppressing, and I testify that there is no god beside Allah, protector of the pious, and I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, Faithful keeper of the promise;

Allah the Exalted said in the sacred Hadith: "I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a pious worshipper of Mine" — related by al-Bukhari.

The wisdom of Allah, the Praised and Exalted, demanded that the earth will not be devoid of a basis for pilgrimage and that this impeccable nation will not agree to exchange the religion of Allah the Exalted or conceal the signs and right guidance which Allah has sent down.

At this time, when the multitudes turn away and others keep silent about the truth for fear or ambitious desire, there remain steadfast voices that call the multitudes of our Islamic nation to return to the path of Allah the Praised and Exalted without paying any attention to the pain and tribulation they have suffered.

For the tribulation is a divine practice, through which Allah can distinguish between true and false, and by which He elevates the states of the Mujahidin on His behalf. Allah the Exalted said: "Alif Lam Mim. Do men think that they will be left alone on saying: We believe, and not be tried? And certainly We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will certainly know the liars" [Surat Al-ankaboot, verses 1-3].

And among those is our Mujahid sheikh, Omar Abd al-Rahman, may Allah release him, who refused to sell his religion for an earthly price, and Allah wished that his words will remain alive in the minds of those who knew him or were educated by him, and despite the fact that Allah the Praised and Exalted has taken from him the duty of Jihad, still his stances and efforts will remain a live lesson for all who carry the knowledge in particular, and for the sons of our Islamic nation in general.

As for those who oppressed our Mujahid sheikh and did not respect his erudite rank, nor his old age, nor his illness, nor his blindness, despite the fact that they speak boastfully of human rights — they do not know that by doing that they humiliate an entire nation, which sees

in the likes of the sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman a true example, a divine invoker and a Mujahid commander — we consider him thus, and we do not vouch for anyone before Allah.

The LIFG, while proclaiming its solidarity and support for the sheikh Omar Abd al-Rahman, reminds all of the Muslims the right of this venerable sheikh and warns the tyrant Americans about the wrath of the Muslims, who are fed up with the American oppression that wreaks havoc upon the earth.

And those who do wrong will come to know by what overturning they will be overturned.

—Commander of the LIFG, Abu Abdallah al-Sadiq (Abd al-Hakim Belhadj)

25th of Muharram, 1418 Hijri — corresponding to the 31st of May, 1997 A.D.⁷⁷

Late in July of 1997, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reported Libyan dissidents were claiming Libyan intelligence chief Musa Kusa had escaped an assassination attempt in Benghazi.⁷⁸ Former NFSL member Ashur al-Shamis advised the press LIFG member Abdallah Radwan, who led an attempt to assassinate Qadhafi in November of 1996, was responsible for this attack. The report of the attack targeting Musa Kusa was not confirmed by Libyan authorities. But it is possible another group was behind this attack: In August, the Islamic Martyrs Movement, one of several other militant Islamist entities conducting operations against the regime in Libya at the time, reported it was responsible for various clashes in Benghazi during June and July, killing and wounding scores of military personnel.⁷⁹ (Note: Late in 2011, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi revealed Musa Kusa is related to one of al-Saadi's uncles through marriage.⁸⁰)

Dated August 26, 1997, and signed by LIFG emir Belhadj, the LIFG's ninth communiqué confirmed Abdallah Radwan was killed by Libyan security forces in Tripoli. Describing the standoff at the group's base, Belhadj wrote that "the battle went on for several hours, during which the enemy forces asked for reinforcements" due to the

“courage and spirit” demonstrated by the “mujahidin.” According to Belhadj, “their motto was: ‘Martyrdom is a relative of salvation.’”⁸¹ The report also confirmed the Libyan Patriots Movement’s claims that agents of the Qadhafi regime had infiltrated armed fundamentalists’ organizations, including the LIFG.⁸²

In its eleventh communiqué, the LIFG reported senior military commander Salah Fathi bin Salman (aka Abu Abd al-Rahman Hattab, aka Abderrahman al-Hattab, aka Muhammad al-Libi) was killed while fighting with Qadhafi’s security forces on September 23, 1997.⁸³ According to a leaked JTF-GTMO detainee assessment, bin Salman’s daughter later weds senior LIFG member Ashraf Salim Abd al-Salam Sultan (aka Abdul Fattah, aka Abu Faris al-Libi, aka Abu Mariam al-Libi, aka Abu Suhaib, aka Jabal al-Antari, aka Hatim, aka Khaled bin Mustafa, aka Suhaib Ashraf Salim Abd al-Rahman). Bin Salman’s widow, who remarried, is believed to have been among the Libyan militants and families of militants flown out of South Asia by the Qadhafi Development Foundation soon after 9/11.

While the group was by this point engaged in a large-scale insurgency inside Libya, it may be seen that Afghanistan had once again become the LIFG’s rear operating base. Indeed, the leaked JTF-GTMO assessment of LIFG military committee official Ismael Ali Farag al-Bakush (aka Subhi Bin Jumah al-Nayli, aka Abu Ali, Munir, aka Al-Hajj, aka Munir al-Libi), who is identified as a “key veteran member of the LIFG through most of its organizational history,” reveals the LIFG was training operatives in camps situated in Jalalabad and Kabul during the mid-1990s.

As noted above, in March 1998 the first Interpol warrant for the arrest of Usama bin Laden was issued from Tripoli. Bin Laden was accused of involvement in the 1994 assassination of German intelligence officer Silvan Becker and his wife in Sirte. According to German press reports, the other suspects, Faraj Hasan Husein al-Shibli (aka Faraj al-Chalabi), Faraj Mikhail Abdul Fadeel Jibril al-Alwan, and Faez Abu Zeid Muftah al-Warfali, were members of the LIFG.⁸⁴

On June 1, 1998, the LIFG conducted its last known

attempt to assassinate Qadhafi.⁸⁵ News reports and the LIFG’s twelfth communiqué stated Qadhafi’s favorite bodyguard, a member of his all-female Amazonian Guard named Aisha, was killed in this attack near Derna.^{86, 87} Soon thereafter, a forged statement from LIFG emir Belhadj emerged in which the author claimed the LIFG was not behind this assassination attempt, sparking suggestions that the Qadhafi regime may have attempted to plant misinformation about the LIFG’s involvement in the press.⁸⁸

On August 7, 1998, al-Qa’ida conducted its dual bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Killing more than 200 people and wounding thousands, the attacks marked the eighth anniversary of the arrival of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm.⁸⁹ Among the 213 dead in Nairobi are Tom Shah and Molly Huckaby Hardy, the first CIA agents killed in al-Qa’ida’s global jihad.^{90, 91}

Including Usama bin Laden, 21 people were later indicted by the U.S. for their roles in the plot. LIFG member Abu Anas al-Libi is among the few people indicted in the case who are believed to be at large today. As mentioned above, al-Libi enjoyed political asylum in Britain until he fled the country in May 2000. He evaded capture when police conducted a raid on his house in Manchester, in which they discovered a 180-page al-Qa’ida jihad manual.⁹²

On August 20, 1998, the Clinton Administration approved cruise missile strikes on facilities believed to be owned or managed by bin Laden and his associates in Sudan and Afghanistan. (Qadhafi called the U.S. strike on facilities in Sudan an act of terrorism during a trip to Sudan in June the following year, asserting “America is bent of terrorizing peoples with missiles and sanctions.”⁹³)

The LIFG promptly issued a response to the strike in its fourteenth communiqué. In it, the group proclaimed the U.S. is not the enemy of bin Laden alone. Rather, it is the enemy of all Muslims:

Praised be Allah, Master of the Worlds, and the end is (best) for the righteous, and no hostility but to the

oppressing, and prayer and peace be upon the messenger, mercy for all creatures, our lord Muhammad, and upon all of his family and companions;

I find shelter in Allah from the accursed Devil: "As for A'ad, they were arrogant in the land without right, and they said: Who is mightier than us in power? Could they not see that Allah Who created them, He was mightier than them in power? And they denied Our revelations. Therefore We let loose on them a raging wind in evil days, that We might make them taste the torment of disgrace in the life of the world. And verily the doom of the Hereafter will be more shameful, and they will not be helped" [Surat Fussilat, verses 15-16].

The arrogant American government has committed an historic folly that confirms the depth of the entanglement that has hurt it recently, and strengthens the feelings of enmity and loathing and vengeance in the minds of the Muslims towards the American demonstration of strength, which deals with others only through the logic of force.

The obvious American hostility against the Muslims in Sudan and Afghanistan, the killing of the innocent, the spreading of terror among the peaceful and the making of some of the civil and industrial institutions into a target without any reason or proof — all these confirm that the American government has chosen the path towards stirring up our Islamic nation, and is pleased to adopt the policy of public confrontation.

The LIFG — since it highly disapproves of this brutal attack and proclaims its support of the Muslims in Sudan and Afghanistan — is presenting some of the facts before the Islamic nation as evidence in regard to the fact that the U.S.A. is not only an enemy of the Mujahid sheikh Usama Bin Laden and the Islamic movements, but it is an enemy of the Islamic nation.

The U.S.A. has stood alongside the Jews, ever since their state was established and to this day, against the Islamic nation, and provided them with weapons with which millions of innocent Muslims were killed. The U.S.A. has supported them — and still does — politically in

international circles and rises against any decision that does not serve the interest of the Jewish state.

The U.S.A. is the one that has bombarded the civil institutions and neighborhoods in Iraq, and prevented food and medicine from the Muslim people of Iraq, which has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of the sons of Iraq in the least, and Saddam Hussein is still intact. The U.S.A. is the one whose airplanes have attacked Libya, not to destroy Qadhafi, but to destroy the houses of Muslims in Libya, and it has besieged wrongfully the people of Libya so that the Muslims there will suffer.

The U.S.A. is the one that has prevented weapons from the Muslims in Bosnia while issuing it to the Serbs.

The U.S.A. is the one to have an envoy in the area of the Balkan declaring that its (the U.S.A.'s) goal is to destroy the Kosovo Liberation army, which made the Albanian Muslims victims of the Serbian hostility so that the tragedy of Bosnia may repeat itself.

And before this American tyranny there is no longer anything the Islamic nation in general and the Islamic movement in particular can do, besides confronting it in order to defend its religion, its territory and its honor.

The LIFG calls upon the Muslims to stand in the face of the American hostility in order to ward off this vicious attack against the sons of our Islamic nation, and to be warned of the poisons of the media, which is manipulated by enemies of the nation in order to tear its ranks asunder and warn its sons.

If the U.S.A. relies upon its airplanes, fleets and missiles, we are relying upon Allah alone — from Him we will receive help, support and aid.

May Allah help whoever helps Him. Truly Allah is powerful and Mighty.

—The Political Bureau of the LIFG

Tuesday, 3rd of Jumada Al-ula, 1419 Hijri — corresponding to the 25th of August, 1998 A.D.⁹⁴

Leaked JTF-GTMO detainee assessments indicate LIFG members like military committee official Omar Khalif

Mohammed Abu Bakr Mahjoub helped al-Qa'ida establish new training facilities after the strikes on its camps in Afghanistan. Libyan militant Abu Faraj al-Libi told interrogators he was personally tasked with relocating two of the camps targeted in the strike to Kabul.

EXODUS

During 1998, the conditions in Libya deteriorated substantially for the LIFG and Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, 152 members of which were jailed by the regime.⁹⁵ Many of the LIFG's prominent members fled to South Asia and Europe. The group reportedly opted to impose a 3-year cessation of major operations to regroup and assess its options.⁹⁶ According to LIFG Sharia committee member Abu Suhayb al-Libi, in 2000 the LIFG would announce a "halt of any military actions in Libya because of the lack of feasibility."⁹⁷

In November 1998, Libyan security sources accused British intelligence of supporting assassination plots targeting Qadhafi hatched by LIFG emir Belhadj, who Libya alleged was a resident of London. The LIFG denied that Belhadj was a resident of London, but noted he frequently traveled in and out of Libya.⁹⁸

Following his release from prison in 2010, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi reported that in 1998 he moved from London to Qatar, where he resided for approximately two years before moving to Pakistan, then on to Afghanistan.⁹⁹ JTF-GTMO assessments indicate LIFG emir Belhadj was present in Afghanistan during the late 90s. It is likely Belhadj fled to Afghanistan during 1998, where he remained until late in 2001.

By the late 1990s it appears the LIFG's membership was not exclusively Libyan. For instance, the leaked JTF-GTMO assessment of Moroccan-born al-Qa'ida military committee member Abdul Latif Nasir (aka Abu al-Harit, aka Abu Haroz, aka Abu Taha, aka Abu Taha al-Maazi, aka Abu Taha al-Maghribi, aka Abu Alaith, aka Tehe, aka Abu al-Hareth, aka Abu Talha al-Moroc, aka Abu Hamza al-Maghribi) reveals LIFG recruiter Abd al-Hakim al-Libi, the younger brother of Abu Laith al-Libi, recruited Nasir to

the group during a meeting in Khartoum, Sudan in the mid-1990s. (Al-Libi allegedly convinced Nasir to travel to Chechnya to conduct extremist operations, which he was unable to do due to travel complications. The group's website devoted pages to the "martyrs" of both Chechnya and Bosnia.¹⁰⁰) Additionally, the leaked JTF-GTMO assessment of Lebanese-born Syrian al-Qa'ida member Jihad Deyab (aka Abu Wail al-Suri, aka Abu Wail al-Falastini) notes Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi reported to interrogators that Deyab was a member of the LIFG.

The leaked JTF-GTMO assessment of Mauritanian al-Qa'ida member Akhmed Aziz, who began receiving support from the LIFG in Mauritania in 1992, notes LIFG member Awad Khalifah Muhammad Abu Bakr Abu Uwayshah al-Barasi referred to Aziz as an "honorary LIFG member at heart." Aziz described the LIFG as a hospitable group. Information he provided interrogators reveals that apart from their known safe houses in Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Europe, the LIFG had established guesthouses in Syria and Turkey. JTF-GTMO detainee assessments reveal the LIFG's guesthouse in Jalalabad, Afghanistan was visited by many prominent terrorists, including in 2000 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who later became the leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq (killed in 2006).

Aziz's account also reveals the LIFG was prominently involved with the logistical aspects of moving jihadis in and out of South Asia. He described the Libyans as the most efficient organization of the North African groups. Accordingly, the LIFG helped Arabs in Pakistan by not only providing them shelter at guesthouses, but also helped them obtain visas, buy plane tickets, and make travel arrangements. Aziz told interrogators the LIFG was very selective when it came to the matter of identifying which groups and individuals were candidates for this support.

Moreover, the LIFG's trainees in Afghanistan were also not an exclusively Libyan group. For instance, leaked documents reveal Yemeni al-Qa'ida member Jalal Salam Awad Awad, who served as one of Usama bin Laden's bodyguards, admitted to U.S. interrogators that he received training at an LIFG camp in Kabul. Accordingly, the camp was governed by LIFG emir Belhadj.

Saudi al-Qa'ida member Abd al-Hadi Abdallah Ibrahim al-Sharikh trained under LIFG military committee official Omar Khalif Mohammed Abu Bakr Mahjoub, who al-Sharikh told interrogators was the head trainer of the Libyan camp between Kabul and Bagram. Repatriated to Saudi Arabia in September 2007, a Pentagon report noted al-Sharikh is one of many al-Qa'ida members from Saudi Arabia who have re-engaged in terrorist activities since being released from Guantanamo Bay.¹⁰¹

One leaked JTF-GTMO detainee assessment reveals several of the al-Qa'ida members who participated in the October 2002 attack against U.S. Marines on Failaka Island, Kuwait were trained in Afghanistan by LIFG military committee member Ali Farag al-Bakush. Furthermore, Yemeni al-Qa'ida member Zuhail Abdo Anam Said al-Sharabi, who underwent training to become a suicide bomber for an aborted component of the 9/11 attacks, told interrogators he traveled to Afghanistan specifically to undergo training at the camp run by LIFG military committee official Omar Khalif Mohammed Abu Bakr Mahjoub.

Indeed, leaked assessments produced by JTF-GTMO reveal that inasmuch as al-Qa'ida camps were used to train LIFG members LIFG camps in Afghanistan were used to train and support militants comprising the ranks of al-Qa'ida and the Afghan Taliban.

The assessment of LIFG member Ismael Ali Farag al-Bakush notes that LIFG emir Belhadj acknowledged the LIFG had established and operated a facility in Kabul specifically for the purpose of supporting the Taliban's front line. It indicates several LIFG members in Jalalabad collectively opted to form an alliance with the Taliban during the late 1990s. It has also been reported that Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar bestowed upon LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi the title "emir of the Arabs in Afghanistan."¹⁰²

Former LIFG Shura Council member Noman bin Othman has noted many senior LIFG officials present in Afghanistan at this time viewed Mullah Omar as a practical visionary due to his focus on imposing a strict Sharia writ over Afghanistan versus waging a global jihad. Indeed, in

an article posted on its website, the LIFG lauded Mullah Omar's decision to rid Afghanistan of idols; specifically, his decision to destroy the 6th Century monuments of standing buddhas carved into a cliff in the Bamyan valley, posting an image of the bombing of this monument on the group's website.¹⁰³

On the other hand, Usama bin Laden's goal of waging a global jihad was apparently considered unrealistic by various LIFG leaders. Still, it would seem that by 1998 the reported rift between the LIFG and al-Qa'ida stemming from the situation in Sudan in 1995 was resolved, and the synergies underlining their operational foci had been largely revived.

According to assessments produced by JTF-GTMO, a split occurred within the LIFG during the late 1990s. Some members of the group wished to remain focused solely on Libyan concerns while others became involved with localized efforts. Some members aligned with the Taliban, pledging fealty to Mullah Omar and supporting the Taliban's campaign against the Northern Alliance. Others began working closely with Core al-Qa'ida, though it would be several years before top LIFG personalities like Abu Laith al-Libi formally joined the group.

While LIFG military officials like Omar Khalif Mohammed Abu Bakr Mahjoub were training members of al-Qa'ida, important members of al-Qa'ida also provided LIFG members special training during the 1990s. The leaked JTF-GTMO assessment of LIFG member Rafdat Muhammad Faqi Alj-Saqqaf (aka Salim Abd al-Salam Umran al-Ghuraybi, aka Luqman al-Libi, aka Luqman al-Zalaytani, aka Hakim Luqman, aka Abu Abd al-Rouf, aka Salem Abdul Salem Ghereby, and possibly Abu al-Ghareed) notes he received training from al-Qa'ida explosives expert Midhat Mursi al-Sayyid Umar, (aka Abu Khabab al-Masri). Killed in a drone strike in Pakistan in July of 2008, Abu Khabab was al-Qa'ida's in-house weapons of mass destruction expert who was tasked with either developing or securing access to WMD on behalf of al-Qa'ida. (In a pre-9/11 memo sent by chemist Abu Khabab to al-Qa'ida's leadership, he asked if it was possible to gather more information

about nuclear weaponry “from our Pakistani friends who have great experience in this sphere.”¹⁰⁴ Information obtained by Kronos from a close associate of Abu Khabab indicates much of the training he provided was focused on chemical and biological warfare.)

According to intelligence reports produced pursuant to interrogations of Khalid Shaykh Mohammad in 2003 and 2004, it seems likely that by the late 1990s the LIFG’s web of contacts included the so-called mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. A note contained in The 9/11 Commission Report reveals KSM claimed to have provided members of the group computer training.¹⁰⁵ As the names of LIFG members appeared on a list of captured mujahidin found on a hard drive associated with KSM, it would seem he may have taken more than just casual interest in the group.¹⁰⁶

A 1999 interview conducted with LIFG spokesperson Omar Rashed (possibly an alias used by Belhadj) highlights how events had prompted the LIFG’s shift toward a broader operational focus than on delivering regime change to Libya alone. This shift seems to have been perpetuated firstly by the group’s experiences in Libya. Rashed noted that although the Libyan people rejected Qadhafi, his regime, and his polices, the Libyan people had “not passed beyond the stage of sentiments to the stage of action.”¹⁰⁷ The Clinton Administration’s response to al-Qa’ida’s 1998 attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania — missile strikes on bin Laden’s facilities and terrorist training camps in Sudan and Afghanistan — also appears to have enlivened the LIFG’s support for al-Qa’ida.

Discussing developments which had impacted the group’s operations, LIFG spokesman Omar Rashed stated: “In my view, the most dangerous development of its kind was the entry of the United States of America into a direct confrontation arena against the Islamic movements. The American missile attacks against Sudan and Afghanistan gives you an indication of the size and nature of any future confrontations. The United States no longer relies on its agents to constrict the Islamic tide; it has taken this role upon itself. For this reason, all future develop-

ments as far as we can see, will turn around that plane, with all that it involves of policies, plots and conspiracies. Here comes the role of the Islamic movement, in that it must comprehend the stance and recheck its priorities. It must also find the means, the manner, and the transactions that will guarantee for it its continuance along the path to its goal for which it was established, and this goal is the adoption of an Islamic life in a geographical location on the world map.”

Usama bin Laden was also providing the LIFG the same financial incentives to associate with al-Qa’ida which he presented in Sudan years earlier. For instance, according to the leaked assessment of LIFG military committee member Omar Khalif Mohammed Abu Bakr Mahjoub, Mahjoub was employed by bin Laden’s company in Afghanistan.

Apart from earning income through employment opportunities provided by bin Laden, the LIFG’s members raised funds through the group’s front NGO, the Sanibal Relief Agency (SRA). According to the U.S. Treasury Department, “SRA was incorporated on February 12, 1999, and subsequently registered with the UK charity commission on November 17, 2000 as a charity with objectives ‘to relieve poverty, sickness and distress and to advance education of persons who are in need of such relief as a result of a natural disaster in particular, but not exclusively, by the provision of funds.’”¹⁰⁸

Identified as the LIFG’s emir during their stay in Sudan and subsequently identified as a member of al-Qa’ida’s Shura Council, according to a leaked JTF-GTMO assessment Saif al-Libi helped run Sanibal’s office in Afghanistan. JTF-GTMO assessments reveal numerous LIFG members worked for Abu Bakr al-Sadiq School in Kabul, which was established and funded by Sanibal. The assessment of senior LIFG member Ashraf Salim Abd al-Salam Sultan, who was among the school’s teachers, notes the school was supported by an al-Qa’ida network associate in the U.K. Financed by an LIFG member in the U.K. known as Abu Rasmi, the school was located in an area of Kabul that was a stronghold for al-Qa’ida, the Taliban, and other extremist movements.

Deceased senior al-Qa'ida and LIFG member Abu Laith al-Libi also helped establish the school. (Featuring a "Kids Corner" section, the LIFG's website demonstrates its leaders were indeed focused on cultivating younger generations of jihadis.¹⁰⁹)

DERAILMENT

On September 11, 2001, al-Qa'ida attacked the U.S. homeland. Discussing the 9/11 attacks, former LIFG member Noman bin Othman has advised that several LIFG leaders condemned the attack while other members had strong reservations about it. He said the LIFG, from an operational and tactical point of view, regarded this as the incident which could prompt the U.S. to sever "the Achilles' heel" for the greater jihadi movement.¹¹⁰ Despite such purported reservations, the group posted an image on its website to commemorate the 9/11 attacks.¹¹¹

Qadhafi was one of the first Arab leaders to condemn the attacks. However, he refused to brand Usama bin Laden as a terrorist, preferring to abstain from such assertions until an international conference could be held to define "terrorism."¹¹²

On September 25, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush signed an executive order to freeze the LIFG's assets in the United States. President Bush asserted the group was planning attacks on America.¹¹³ Weeks later, on October 6, 2001, the United Nations Security Council added the LIFG to its consolidated list of entities associated with al-Qa'ida.¹¹⁴

On October 7, 2001, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan. The same month, senior Bush Administration officials traveled to Libya to meet with the head of Libya's External Security Organization, Musa Kusa. The U.S. provided information about Libyans who had trained in al-Qa'ida camps, along with the names of Libyan militants living in the U.K. Two months later, the Bush Administration added the LIFG to its terrorism exclusion list.

Leaked JTF-GTMO detainee assessments indicate a substantial list of LIFG members were killed and captured in Afghanistan and Pakistan following 9/11, and its core

leadership fled Afghanistan. LIFG emir Belhadj and LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi fled to Iran. The LIFG's deputy emir, Khalid al-Sharif, escaped to Pakistan, where he remained until 2003. Interrogators determined that several LIFG fighters captured by the Pakistanis were arrested during raids on safe houses managed by Lashkar-e-Tayyiba.

Before fleeing to Pakistan and other countries, many LIFG members fought against the U.S. at Tora Bora, attempting to defend Usama bin Laden's last stronghold in Afghanistan. LIFG emir Belhadj was among the jihadis who elected to leave Kabul for Tora Bora. However, according to Noman bin Othman, Belhadj did not fight. Instead, he urged bin Laden to withdraw and took several of his men to Pakistan due to his concerns that Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi did not have a viable plan in place for the defense of Tora Bora.¹¹⁵

Several LIFG members were captured fleeing Tora Bora alongside fellow Libyan Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi. LIFG member Abu Yahya al-Libi was also captured in Pakistan in 2002 (he later escapes from prison).

According to leaked JTF-GTMO detainee assessments, Abd al-Hakim al-Libi, (aka Muhammad Ahmad al-Shariah, aka Muhammad Ahmad Muhammad al-Shuruiya, aka Rabii al-Libi, aka Karim al-Libi), the younger brother of Abu Laith al-Libi, was among the notable LIFG members killed during the battles that followed 9/11. Abd al-Hakim al-Libi, who served as a trainer, explosives expert, and as a recruiter for the LIFG, was killed while attempting to defend Kabul.

Although many jihadis amassed in Tora Bora to protect bin Laden, with approval and a pledge of support from al-Qa'ida — a promise to send 200 reinforcements who were never deployed to assist the jihadis who remained in the area — LIFG member Abu Laith al-Libi had stayed behind to lead a defense of Kabul against Western forces. LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi and Abu Faraj al-Libi also remained behind to help defend Kabul.¹¹⁶

LIFG officials who evaded capture in South Asia found refuge in Europe, notably in the U.K. Two years later, the

LIFG's two senior-most ranking leaders were captured in Asia while attempting to travel to London.

In January 2002, Libya launched a website to offer a \$1 Million antiterrorism reward for information leading to the arrests of various Islamist militants. LIFG emir Belhadj was at the top of the list.¹¹⁷

The following month, in a move that surely alarmed Western officials focused on capturing Islamist militants to learn more about jihadi groups operating in South Asia, the Qadhafi Development Foundation, which was led by Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam, flew 44 Libyans who had been living in Afghanistan back to Libya.¹¹⁸ Preparations for the transfer reportedly began in November 2001, and involved payments to Afghan tribal leaders to facilitate passage into Pakistan for members of this group.

Perhaps as a signal to Islamists and jihadis who might have been planning to return to Libya from South Asia following 9/11, on February 16, 2002, the Qadhafi regime delivered death sentences to Dr. Abd al-Qadir Izz-al-Din, controller general of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya and professor of nuclear engineering at Al-Fatih University, and Dr. Salim Abu-Hanak, deputy controller-general and head of the chemistry department at Qari Yunus University in Benghazi. Additionally, the regime sentenced 73 members of the Muslim Brotherhood to life in prison, sentenced others to 10-year jail terms, and issued 66 acquittals. The majority of charges against this group of mostly students and academics pertained to alleged violations of Libya's Law 71, which banned political activism in opposition to the tenets of the 1969 revolution that propelled Qadhafi to power.^{119 120}

The following year, the depth of the Qadhafi regime's antiterrorism interests became measurably shallow as Qadhafi explored collaborative opportunities with al-Qa'ida.

In early March 2003, during a televised Arab League Conference in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, Qadhafi criticized Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah for hosting U.S. troops ahead of the Iraq War. In return, the Crown Prince questioned where Qadhafi derived his authority from and walked out.¹²¹ On March 13, 2003, Libyan officials invited Aduraham Alamoudi, an Eritrean-born naturalized U.S.

citizen, to meet with them in Libya.¹²² Alamoudi, who had ties to U.K.-based Saudi dissidents who were also al-Qa'ida-linked operatives, agreed to serve as the Qadhafi regime's fixer for a plot to hire al-Qa'ida to assassinate Crown Prince Abdullah.¹²³ According to the U.S. Treasury Department, during the following months Alamoudi transferred \$1 Million to the U.K.-based Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA). In 2005, Treasury designated MIRA for providing support to al-Qa'ida, noting prosecutors in the case against al-Qa'ida members responsible for the 1998 attacks on U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania had proven MIRA was responsible for supplying UBL a satellite phone used to coordinate the attacks.¹²⁴

While Qadhafi eyed opportunities to utilize terrorism against his opponents in the Middle East, it appears that after fleeing Afghanistan various LIFG members turned their focus back to the Maghreb. On May 16, 2003, more than 40 people, including more than 10 suicide bombers, were killed in simultaneous attacks throughout Casablanca, Morocco. LIFG member Abd Al-Rahman Al-Faqih (arrested in Britain in 2006) was found guilty in absentia by a Moroccan court for his role in the attacks.¹²⁵ Along with Core al-Qa'ida international terror operations chief Saif al-Adl, Malik al-Andalusi (aka Abd al-Atif Mourafik) and Moroccan LIFG member Nasir al-Maghribi (aka Abd al-Rahim Idrisi) are listed among the individuals suspected of plotting these attacks.

An unclassified assessment of Tunisian al-Qa'ida facilitator Andullah al-Tunis bin Omar al-Tunisi notes that bin Omar visited a safe house in Zahedan, Iran following 9/11 that was run by Abd al-Ghaffar al-Libi.¹²⁶ A leaked JTF-GTMO assessment notes that Moroccan LIFG member Nasir al-Maghribi was present at the safe house. According to bin Omar al-Tunisi, al-Libi had shared with al-Maghribi that al-Andalusi and others planned to travel to Morocco to continue their jihad. (Note: Home to an important Qods Force base, Zahedan, Iran is also home to several camps where Sunni militants engaged in anti-Coalition operations in Afghanistan, particularly Taliban-affiliated fighters, have received combat training.)

According to information he provided interrogators following his capture in Pakistan in May 2005, the same month Abu Faraj al-Libi received a letter from Usama bin Laden, who appointed al-Libi to serve as his official courier between others in Pakistan. Soon thereafter, Abu Faraj al-Libi moved his family to Abbottabad and worked between Abbottabad and Peshawar.

Also in 2003, the LIFG's deputy emir, Khalid al-Sharif, was captured in Peshawar, Pakistan. He was handed over to the U.S., which later transferred him to Libya. Al-Sharif claims that he was tortured while held by the U.S. in Afghanistan prior to his extradition to Libya in 2005.¹²⁷

According to Noman bin Othman, LIFG emir Belhadj and LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi were among the Libyans who arrived in Iran soon after 9/11.¹²⁸ Following his release from Abu Salim prison in 2010, al-Saadi reported he remained in Iran for a year.¹²⁹ He said he was detained by Iranian authorities for two months before they deported him to Malaysia.¹³⁰ In 2005, Noman bin Othman claimed Belhadj and al-Saadi moved to China upon their departure from Iran. Accordingly, they then moved to another location — presumably Malaysia — due to security concerns in China.¹³¹

Belhadj and al-Saadi were detained by the CIA and returned to Libya with members of their families in March 2004.¹³² Documents discovered by rebel fighters after the fall of Tripoli in 2011 reveal British intelligence had informed the CIA of their locations.¹³³

Al-Saadi was detained by the CIA for 10 days in Hong-Kong after attempting to arrange for his family's return to Britain.¹³⁴ Following his release from prison in 2010, al-Saadi reported he was not harmed by the CIA.¹³⁵

Belhadj says he was detained in Malaysia on immigration-related charges after attempting to travel to London via Beijing in February 2004.^{136, 137} He was carrying a French passport issued to Jamal Kaderi, but was released by the Malaysians after he applied for asylum in the U.K. using a Moroccan passport issued to Abdul al-Nabi.¹³⁸ His flight to London was redirected to Bangkok, where Belhadj and his pregnant wife were detained by Thai authorities and the CIA, which then transferred them to

Libya.¹³⁹ In September 2011, Belhadj claimed the CIA had tortured him at a secret prison before handing him over to Libya.¹⁴⁰

Days after Belhadj and al-Saadi were sent to Libya, on March 11, 2004, 191 people were killed and another 1,800 were wounded in a series of bombings targeting the commuter train system in Madrid, Spain. It has been assessed that the LIFG was involved in these attacks.¹⁴¹

In September 2011, Belhadj acknowledged that while in China he was called twice by Serhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhet (aka The Tunisian), the ringleader of the Madrid bombings, weeks before the attacks.¹⁴² Although he says he did not answer the phone because he did not recognize the number, he apparently did call Fakhet's Jordanian business partner Mohd Othman several days later to discuss "personal issues," which, according to Belhadj, were unrelated to the Madrid plot. Belhadj's office told reporters the liaison between the Madrid plotters and Belhadj was an LIFG member named Ziyad Hashim, who scolded Belhadj for failing to answer Fakhet's calls. Upon learning about the details of Spain's investigation of the attacks, which named him as a coconspirator, Belhadj reportedly refused to discuss his past as a jihadist. He told reporters, "Everything became clear during the interrogation conducted by Spanish agents in Tripoli."

Late in May 2004, LIFG member Abu Hafs al-Libi was killed in Iraq during the first assault on Fallujah. Abu Hafs al-Libi had lived in Ireland from 1996 through April 2004. Soon after his arrival in Iraq al-Libi became a lieutenant of al-Qa'ida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Al-Libi reportedly sent word back to his associates in Ireland via contacts in London that he had participated in the beheading of an "infidel" in May. (Note: American construction worker Nicholas Berg was beheaded by al-Zarqawi's group the same month). Al-Libi, who had spent time in Afghanistan during the early 1990s, traveled between Yemen and Sudan before settling in Ireland in 1996.¹⁴³

Ireland was also a place where the LIFG likely raised funds. The leaked JTF-GTMO assessment of Libyan al-Qa'ida Member and former LIFG member Muhammad

Abdallah Mansur al-Rimi (aka Muhammad Abd Allah Mansur Safrani al-Futuri, aka Abd al-Salam Abd al-Hadi Umar al-Safrani, aka Abu Haleem, aka Abu Bakr al-Libi), who was transferred to Libya in December 2006, states Zuhair al-Libi (believed to have been killed in Kandahar before al-Qa'ida fled Afghanistan in 2001) gave him \$1,800 that had been wired from Ireland. The sequence of the bills matched other \$100 bills carried by other al-Qa'ida members captured around this time.

At some point in 2004 Iran rounded up a number of jihadis who had fled Afghanistan following 9/11. A prominent LIFG member named Abd-al-Mun'im Mukhtar al-Madhun (aka Urwah) was among them. After security forces in Libya killed al-Madhun in an ambush in April 2011, a leading member of the LIFG explained that he had been held by the Iranians until 2010, when he was released alongside various al-Qa'ida members.¹⁴⁴ Al-Madhun and other Libyan jihadis decided to remain in Iran until the anti-Qadhafi uprisings began in 2011, at which point they returned to Libya to support the rebels.

The LIFG was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department on December 8, 2004. The announcement of this designation explained: "Its leadership has had a close association with al-Qa'ida. Some senior members of LIFG are believed to be or have belonged to al-Qa'ida's senior command structure, and now are part of the support network of the broader international jihadist movement. LIFG members have been directly or indirectly implicated in a number of terrorist activities, particularly in North Africa. LIFG actively targets Libya and is believed to have been involved in planning and facilitating the May 2003 bombings in Casablanca, Morocco. The LIFG constitutes the most serious threat to U.S. interests and personnel in Libya."¹⁴⁵

In April of 2005, LIFG deputy emir Khalid al-Sharif was transferred from U.S. custody to Libya.¹⁴⁶

On May 2, 2005, Abu Faraj al-Libi was arrested in Pakistan. An LIFG-affiliate who joined al-Qa'ida in the 1990s, Abu Faraj al-Libi had become a senior-most operations commander in Core al-Qa'ida, providing oversight of operations targeting American forces in Iraq and

Afghanistan. He had bragged of killing 100 Americans in Afghanistan during an appearance on Al Jazeera.

On July 10, 2005, LIFG member Abu Yahya al-Libi escaped from the prison at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁷ During subsequent years Abu Yahya al-Libi ascended to a senior position within Core al-Qa'ida, becoming one the terror group's key public personalities and a top legal authority as a member of its Sharia committee.¹⁴⁸

By August 2005 Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam was publicly discussing plans for developing a "rehabilitation" dialogue focused on reconciling relations between the regime and Islamist groups. In a television interview he told Al Jazeera that jailed Islamists — notably members of the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadist groups — would be released and reinstated in their previous jobs. The same month, the Qadhafi regime announced 787 dissidents who were living in exile had accepted invitations to return to Libya.¹⁴⁹

Asked by Al Jazeera how many political prisoners were still held by the Qadhafi regime, Saif al-Islam replied: "I don't have the number with me as well but the number that will be released in the coming few days is 131, which includes members of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as members of other groups that have adopted violent means such as The Libyan [Islamic] Fighting Group and the Repudiation and Renunciation groups [Arabic: Al-Takfir Wa al-Hijrah]. Those individuals have changed their thought and convictions. There is an overall conviction that they will integrate in the society and abandon violence."¹⁵⁰

On September 3, 2005, a Libyan newspaper reported the Qadhafi regime had released 1,675 prisoners to mark the 36th anniversary of the 1969 Libyan revolution. Led by Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam, the Qadhafi Development Foundation called for the release of all Islamist prisoners, except for the nearly 500 charged with belonging to eight groups which advocated violence.¹⁵¹ Yet movement on the releases of certain elements was slow to take shape. Indeed, in January 2006, The Associated Press reported nearly 130 political prisoners, mainly members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya, had started a hunger strike

in response to Saif al-Islam's failed promise to release them.¹⁵²

The British government designated the LIFG a terrorist organization in October 2005. Years later, while discussing Libyan-British relations exiled LIFG Sharia committee member Abu Suhayb al-Libi pointed out that the date the designation was announced coincided with the tenth anniversary of the LIFG's announcement of its existence in Libya.¹⁵³ The same month, British authorities arrested five Libyans suspected of being affiliated with the LIFG.¹⁵⁴ Discussing the arrests, a Libyan Islamist reported to Al-Sharq Al-Awsat that more than a dozen LIFG leaders were living in Britain at this point.¹⁵⁵ Within weeks, Britain signed a deal with the Qadhafi regime and deported the men to Libya.¹⁵⁶

On February 8, 2006, the U.S. Treasury Department designated five individuals and four entities based in the U.K. for their roles financing the LIFG.¹⁵⁷ The Sanibal Relief Agency was among the designated entities. Treasury explained, "While SRA characterizes itself to the public as a charitable organization, its first priority is providing support to the LIFG's jihadist activities. LIFG's fundraising charity is SRA, which is controlled by leaders of the LIFG. Directors of SRA use the charity as a vehicle to transfer money and documents for terrorist activities overseas." Treasury has since asserted the greatest amount of funding for the LIFG originated in London.¹⁵⁸

In March 2006, LIFG member Abd al-Rahman al-Faqih was arrested in Britain when authorities discovered he was in possession of a bomb-making manual titled "A Special Training Course on the Manufacture of Explosives," as well as a document that described how to establish a terrorist cell.¹⁵⁹ Al-Faqih was among the five LIFG members designated by the U.S. Treasury Department the previous month. Treasury identified al-Faqih as "a senior leader of the LIFG and is involved in the provision of false passports and money to LIFG members worldwide."¹⁶⁰ As noted above, he was found guilty in absentia by a Moroccan court for his involvement in the May 2003 attacks in Casablanca, Morocco. At a

preliminary hearing in Britain, he admitted to two charges of possessing materials "likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism."¹⁶¹ He also admitted to authoring the document outlining how to establish a terrorist cell.

LIFG member Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi was reportedly extradited to Libya in April 2006.¹⁶² Al-Libi, who was captured soon after 9/11, had become an important Core al-Qa'ida military official as the leader of the Khaldan camp in Afghanistan. While held in Egypt, he told interrogators Saddam Hussein had provided support to al-Qa'ida. His claim, later said to have been issued under duress, had been used by American officials to argue their case for seeking regime change in Iraq.¹⁶³

The following month, the LIFG suffered additional setbacks in Europe. A leaked cable from the U.S. Embassy in Bern, Switzerland dated May 24, 2006 reveals Swiss authorities arrested eight men suspected of belonging to an LIFG cell in Zurich and Basel on May 12 and May 15, 2006. They were allegedly plotting to use RPGs to attack American or Israeli aircraft in Zurich or Geneva, and one cell member reportedly mentioned a plan to launch an attack during the World Cup Soccer Championship games hosted in Germany during the following two months. One of the two key suspects was Badr al-Juwadi, who had been in contact with a suspected member of al-Qa'ida's Hamburg cell. Authorities claimed Al-Juwadi had advised a friend in Germany to leave the country while the World Cup events were taking place.

It is evident that in August 2006 jihadis from eastern Libya began to flow into Iraq to support anti-Coalition operations. In October 2007, Coalition forces in Iraq conducted a raid near Sinjar, which is located along Iraq's border with Syria. They collected records for approximately 700 foreign fighters who entered Iraq between August 2006 and August 2007. The 595 records which include country of origin information revealed Saudi Arabia was the leading source of foreign fighters (244), with Libya ranking second (112). Among the countries of origin reflected in the "Sinjar Records," on a per capita basis

Libya was contributing far more fighters than any other country. The eastern Libya city Derna (population of approximately 80,000) contributed the greatest number of these fighters, with Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (population of 4.3 million) ranking second; Mecca, Benghazi, and Casablanca rank third, fourth, and fifth, respectively. Of the Libyans listed, some 60 percent were from Derna, and 24 percent were from Benghazi.¹⁶⁴

In 2011, it emerged that LIFG member Abd al-Hakim Khalil al-Hasadi had recruited jihadis from eastern Libya to support the insurgency in Iraq. Al-Hasadi was captured along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in 2001.¹⁶⁵ He was subsequently handed over to Libya by the U.S. Al-Hasadi told reporters he was released from prison in 2008, which indicates the recruitment of jihadis for operations in Iraq continued well beyond the discovery of the Sinjar Records in 2007.¹⁶⁶ Regarding this situation, a leaked U.S. diplomatic cable from 2008 states: "Frustration at the inability of eastern Libyans to effectively challenge Qaddafi's regime, together with a concerted ideological campaign by returned Libyan fighters from earlier conflicts, have played important roles" in turning locals to militancy. "One Libyan interlocutor likened young men in Derna to Bruce Willis's character in the action picture 'Die Hard,' who stubbornly refused to die quietly. For them, resistance against coalition forces in Iraq is an important act of 'jihad' and a last act of defiance against the Qaddafi regime."¹⁶⁷

On the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Ayman al-Zawahiri announced the merger of Algeria's GSPC with al-Qa'ida, creating what has become known as al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): "Our Amir, mujahid Shaykh and lion of Islam Usama Bin Ladin, may God protect him, has instructed me to give the good news to Muslims in general, and my brothers the mujahidin everywhere that the Salafi Group for Call and Combat has joined Al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization. So, praise is due to God, praise is due to God, and praise is due to God for this blessed alliance, which we ask God that it will be a bone in the throats of the Americans and French Crusaders and their allies that would bring on them distress, trepidation, and dejection in the hearts of the

traitorous apostate sons of France. We beseech Him Almighty to guide our brothers at the Salafi Group for Call and Combat to success in order to crush the pillars of the Crusader alliance, especially their old immoral leader, America. All praise is due to God, first and last. I seize the opportunity provided by this good news to remind myself and all my brothers who work to serve Islam, help the Muslims, and confront the Zionist-Crusader campaign and its agents of the necessity of unity since it is the gateway to victory and it is the legal duty of the Muslims when facing their enemies."¹⁶⁸

Although AQIM would focus on advancing al-Qa'ida's interests in North Africa and the Sahel, Core al-Qa'ida leaders kept Libya out of this franchise's operational purview. According to Noman bin Othman, Libyan matters remained subject to "central decision from al-Qa'ida command in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions." He explained, "Dr. al-Zawahiri issued orders to al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb countries, that is to the Algerians who took command of the organization, not to interfere in Libya unless ordered to do so by him personally. I also know that Dr. al-Zawahiri considers Libya to be directly tied to Egyptian affairs since it can, in his view, affect the jihadist political situation in Egypt."¹⁶⁹

RECALIBRATION

In November 2006, working through the Qadhafi Development Foundation, Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam began preliminary discussions with imprisoned senior LIFG figures. LIFG emir Belhadj and the group's spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi represented the LIFG in the discussions that would transform into negotiations focused on arriving at some form of reconciliation between the LIFG and the regime. The effort reflected a component of Saif al-Islam's larger plan titled "The Plan for Tomorrow's Libya," which called for the neutralization of political opposition centers within Libya.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, Saif al-Islam sought to establish a Libyan jihadi rehabilitation program which would be modeled on the recent successes realized by the Mubarak regime in Egypt.

One of the key mediators involved with these negotiations was exiled Libyan Islamist cleric Ali al-Sallabi. Born in Benghazi, al-Sallabi is the son of an eastern Libyan banker with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1988, al-Sallabi left Libya after spending nearly eight years in prison due to charges he was aware of a plot to assassinate Qadhafi. He reportedly studied in Saudi Arabia and Sudan, spending time in Yemen before moving to Qatar. Although based in Qatar, al-Sallabi became a popular figure within Libya's conservative Muslim spheres.

Several years before Saif al-Islam launched this project, al-Sallabi helped establish the détente his host country Qatar encouraged between the Qadhafi regime and many Libyan Islamists.¹⁷¹ Through these earlier negotiations, his brother Ismail, jailed in 1997 on charges he had supported jihadis' efforts to topple the regime, was released from prison in 2004. (The al-Sallabi brothers later assumed prominent roles in the 2011 revolution, with Ali al-Sallabi becoming the revolution's "spiritual leader" and Ismail serving as commander of the influential Benghazi-based February 17 Martyrs' Brigade.)

Representatives of the Qadhafi regime who took part in these negotiations included military intelligence chief Abdullah al-Sanusi, foreign intelligence chief Musa Kusa (a relative through marriage of LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi), and Libya's top internal security official Al-Tuhami Khalid.¹⁷²

Ali al-Sallabi was not the only person with an Islamist background participating in the negotiations with the LIFG. Saif al-Islam invited former LIFG Shura Council member Noman bin Othman to serve as a mediator in the negotiations. Qatar-based Global Muslim Brotherhood thought leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi was also included in the negotiations as a counselor.

Al-Qaradawi is a firebrand cleric from Egypt whose comments often suggest he is a Muslim Brotherhood principal who embraces the so-called HAMAS principle. Indeed, he is regarded as the spiritual leader of HAMAS.¹⁷³

In 2004, al-Qaradawi encouraged Muslims in Iraq to resist the presence of Coalition forces, who he labeled occupiers. Discussing his views on Al Jazeera in 2004, he

asserted that anyone cooperating with the "enemy" should be categorized a "fighter," including people such as a truck driver who had been kidnapped while delivering food and other basic supplies to troops stationed in Iraq.¹⁷⁴ Asked if the presence of foreign insurgents in Iraq was justified by Sharia, al-Qaradawi asserted Islamic law does permit their counter-Coalition operations: "If a Muslim land is occupied, then its people should fight the occupier. Others should also help them with funds and weapons, in spirit, through prayers, and in any way possible. The Muslims are one nation."

Several years later, al-Qaradawi issued a particularly provocative missive, proclaiming: "Throughout history, Allah has imposed upon the [Jews] people who would punish them for their corruption. The last punishment was carried out by Hitler. By means of all the things he did to them — even though they exaggerated this issue — he managed to put them in their place. This was divine punishment for them. Allah willing, the next time will be at the hand of the believers."¹⁷⁵ Days earlier, al-Qaradawi's comments on Al Jazeera contained shades of jihadi fervor: "I'd like to say that the only thing I hope for is that as my life approaches its end, Allah will give me an opportunity to go to the land of Jihad and resistance, even if in a wheelchair. I will shoot Allah's enemies, the Jews, and they will throw a bomb at me, and thus, I will seal my life with martyrdom. Praise be to Allah ..."¹⁷⁶

Even if from afar, like his associate Ali al-Sallabi, al-Qaradawi would later play a prominent role in the 2011 Libyan revolution, calling on Muslims to rise up against the Qadhafi regime. In February 2011, al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa calling for the assassination of Qadhafi.

Late in December 2006, some 60 individuals charged with supporting the LIFG and committing acts of violence were released from prison.¹⁷⁷ However, according to Noman bin Othman, the talks stalled early. Discussing the matter with the press, bin Othman criticized the Libyan authorities for engaging in a "jurisprudence debate with the jailed leaders" that was focused on the LIFG's approach, and dismissed the regime's arguments along these lines because "the interlocutors are not religious

jurisprudents.”¹⁷⁸ Bin Othman argued that assessments of the LIFG’s “approach” should be made at “one of the later stages of the solution following the release of the group’s leaders and when they have their freedom and can talk voluntarily.” He added that the group “can make use of” both the Egyptian “IG’s” and the armed Algerian groups’ experiences abandoning violence. Yet he cautioned the LIFG’s experience is “unique and different.”

The next hurdle in the process arose due to LIFG leaders’ concerns that they could not issue any of the declarations sought by the regime without first reaching a consensus with all of the group’s leaders. Addressing this concern following a meeting with the group’s leaders in Abu-Salim prison, in January 2007 former LIFG Shura Council member Noman bin Othman stated: “The leadership of the Islamic Fighting Group now wants to say that the members and leaders of the group are not only those in prison in Libya, but there are other members whose opinion, advice, and decision about the dialogs are very important.”¹⁷⁹ According to bin Othman, the imprisoned LIFG leaders specifically advised that they wished to consult with the following LIFG members: Abu-al-Laith al-Libi (killed in Pakistan in 2008), Abd-al-Mun’im Mukhtar al-Madhun , who was referred to as “brother Urwah” (then in Iran; killed by the regime in an ambush upon his return to Libya in 2011), Abdallah Sa’id (killed in Pakistan in 2009), and Abu-Yahya al-Libi (brother of then jailed LIFG founding member Abd al-Wahab al-Qayid; presently at large).

It has been suggested another LIFG Shura Council member was equally concerned about observing the group’s protocols for making such important decisions. Noman bin Othman says LIFG Shura Council member Abu Laith al-Libi had for many years been contemplating ways to merge the LIFG with al-Qa’ida. He believed Sharia compelled him to remain in Afghanistan to fight the U.S. However, despite his efforts to unite LIFG members who became scattered abroad following 9/11 under his command, Abu Laith al-Libi did not have the authority to unilaterally make decisions pertaining to mergers. Bin Othman says that by 2007, Abu Laith al-Libi and Abdallah Sa’id were planning a return to the Maghreb to

continue their jihad in North Africa. Naturally, assuming an official position within al-Qa’ida’s ranks versus continuing to operate as a proxy would have meant Abu Laith al-Libi would encounter more favorable conditions upon his return to the North African jihadi fold.¹⁸⁰

The amount of time required for Abu Laith to issue his decision to merge certain LIFG members under his command into the al-Qa’ida fold may have been a function of something more than his desire to consult with other LIFG Shura Council members beforehand. Following the 9/11 attacks, Abu Laith and other LIFG leaders like Sami al-Saadi elected to remain in Kabul, where they attempted to defend the capital against Western forces. Although al-Qa’ida approved the decision and promised to send 200 reinforcements, these fighters were never dispatched to Kabul, and the jihadis fighting to block the occupation of Kabul suffered heavy losses.¹⁸¹ Among the dead was Abu Laith’s younger brother, Abd al-Hakim al-Libi. Additionally, Noman bin Othman says the issue of the relationship between Libya and Algeria within the framework of the Maghreb branch of al-Qa’ida delayed Abu Laith al-Libi’s decision. Accordingly, “They solved this issue through an administrative separation; Libya was removed from the framework of al-Qa’ida command in Algeria. The command in Algeria would have not have prerogative to issue orders, make decisions or take actions regarding the Libyan theater. These orders would be issued from the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran triangle, specifically by Dr. al-Zawahiri who considers this his personal project; and he dispatched directives (to al-Qa’ida in Algeria) not to interfere in Libyan affairs.”¹⁸²

Perhaps as a signal to the Libyan regime and the LIFG leaders who were engaged in negotiations with the regime, late in April 2007 Abu Laith al-Libi participated in a 43-minute video interview with al-Qa’ida’s official media organization, As-Sahab. Al-Libi stated the mujahidin in Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, Afghanistan, Algeria, Somalia, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, and other Islamic countries were progressing toward the goal of establishing an Islamic state. Discussing calls for establishing a more unified front, al-Libi remarked, “if we are not united in times of tragedy,

we will not be united in happier times.”¹⁸³ He concluded his remarks by asserting, “the greatest truth in this era is Jihad and fighting the infidels ... the greatest call a man can make in this era is the call on Muslims to observe the religion of their Lord and go forth to protect their nation from this fierce infidel onslaught on the entire Islamic nation.”

In August 2007, Abu Yahya al-Libi addressed the matter of jailed jihadis issuing apologies for and repudiations of their past pursuits. In an interview with As-Sahab that was posted to jihadi websites in September 2007, he asserted these “retractions” should not necessarily be taken seriously as they were authored under coercive measures applied by “underlings” of the U.S., which he said had encouraged these retractions to strengthen its counter-terrorism efforts:

As for the story of the retractions, which some are attempting to portray as an ideological defeat for the Jihadist methodology and a crushing deathblow to it, it is one of the rings of the conflict created by the leaders of infidelity in the lobbies of the Egyptian security organs, who advertised it as a fine new prescription which might help in treating the serious plight in which they and their masters find themselves as a result of the Jihadist tide flooding the region and the world. Some Arab states have rushed to snap it up, like the state of Al Sa’ud (Saudi Arabia), Libya, Jordan, and other states. So, this is why we don’t look at the retractions, which have been published or might be published here and there, in a restricted fashion to the effect that so-and-so has abandoned the Jihadist fighting methodology which he used to advocate lest we fall with them into the merry-go-round of detailed rebuttals and debates, unless it was to remove a misunderstanding, not to debate a fundamental. Instead, we look at the issue of retractions as being a completely new idea which is part of the system of the war of ideas which is one of the fierce fronts of the confrontation between us and our enemies, the Crusaders and their underlings. So, let us deal with this phenomenon on this basis. Otherwise, we safeguard

for those to whom the reactions were attributed their precedent, their Jihad, their status, and their worth, and we also take account of the circumstances of many of them in the unusual ideas which emanated from them or might emanate from them, ideas which oozed from the darkness of the prison cells and under the whips of the lashers and the policy of repression and compulsion. And perhaps you will agree with me that with ideas produced under such circumstances, you cannot attribute true conviction to their producer. ...

The Crusaders, led by America and its underlings, have come to realize that the Jihad is not what they had imagined. It is not merely short-lived military operations which are no more than a reaction to the bitter reality which the Mujahidin see in their nation, no[r] is it merely an attempt to end economic, social, or political suffering, in which case it would be possible to absorb that agitation with some reformist patching to anesthetize the nation before returning to performing the surgical operations with which its limbs are amputated without it feeling a thing. No! And since they have arrived at this truth, they have become active in opening new fronts against the Mujahidin, fronts which employ two pivots. The first is the pivot of internal disassembling of the Jihadist groups and indeed, the entire Jihadist methodology. After coming into contact with the Mujahidin and their becoming privy to many of the details of their ideas, which they arrived at through the Mujahidin’s literature or speeches, or through the discussions which take place now and then inside the interrogation centers behind bars, they realized that the matter is larger and deeper than being just atmospheric crackle, temporary reactions, or mere reflections of inter-linked suffering. They realized that the greatest part of the battle lies in the well founded convictions and doctrinal-methodological principles which the Mujahidin adopt and through which they work and which represent their real motivation and mover in the actions they carry out against these infidel states and their allies. And thus, they thought, calculated, looked around, and then came to the conclusion that a large part of the battle depends on shaking the

*convictions on which the Mujahidin build their march and casting doubts on the doctrinal principles they consider indisputable, in which case there will occur a splitting or perhaps collapse of the basic foundations and fundamentals on which the Jihadist methodology stands. And we know that practical vacillation, hesitation, and confusion is a reflection and expression of doctrinal and methodological vacillation, detachment, and darkness. So, this is the first pivot from which is launched the concept of the war of ideas directed against the Mujahidin, which has become an intrinsic part of the sweeping Crusader battle. As for the second pivot, it is the attempt to isolate the Mujahidin from the nation and besiege them in its midst, and consider them to be an alien body growing inside Islamic society which must be removed. This is because we know that the Mujahidin are nor more than an inseparable part of the Islamic nation in terms of religion, doctrine, and affiliation. The continuation of this visualization and the practical issues which stem from it means the continuation of the flooding of the Jihadist tide and its resurgence through the nation's embracing of it and its feeling and conviction that this tide is an extension to its efforts and backing, physically, morally, and economically. Thus, the Crusaders want to put in place obstacles and barriers between the Muslim peoples and this understanding and feeling so that all the issues which the Mujahidin raise would no longer be an expression of the nation's conscience, creed, and outlook, but instead would be deviant, outcast ideas confined to a small group which would act in a random and impulsive fashion, in which case the Mujahidin would be hemmed in and start to erode from the inside, and it wouldn't be long before they would fade out and come to an end.*¹⁸⁴

Noman bin Othman says Abu Laith al-Libi and the group of LIFG fighters under his command finally joined al-Qa'ida in September 2007.¹⁸⁵ (Note: It has been suggested the oath sworn to bin Laden by Abu Laith al-Libi pertained only to operational coordination in Afghanistan and Pakistan as al-Libi preferred to operate as an LIFG member beyond AfPak.)

Abu Laith al-Libi and Ayman al-Zawahiri officially

announced al-Libi and other LIFG members had joined al-Qa'ida through messages posted to jihadi websites on November 3, 2007. In a video produced by As-Sahab, Ayman al-Zawahiri advised:

*Today, with God's blessing and grace, the Islamic nation is witnessing a blessed, kind, and benevolent step taken by the pioneering mujahidin on the path of its unity in God's obedience and bidding for His victory and support. A group of men who initiated jihad, took the path of struggle, hoisted the flags of the call for Islam and jihad, and took the lead in patience and steadfastness of the elite Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, has announced joining Al-Qa'ida of Jihad in order to continue the march of their brothers who sacrificed their souls in battlefields and spent their lives in prison of their own accord to satisfy their God.*¹⁸⁶

Addressing his "brothers" among the LIFG members imprisoned in Libya, al-Zawahiri stated:

Dear brothers, his eminence, the mujahid scholar Abu-al-Munzir al-Sa'idi [LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi]; the amir of mujahidin, the patient and steadfast Abu-Abdallah al-Sadiq [LIFG emir Belhadj]; and the rest of the captives of the fighting Islamic group in Libya, here is good news for you: Your brothers are continuing your march after you, following in your footsteps, holding the flag that you hoisted, and escalating their confrontation with the enemies of Islam: (Libyan leader) Al-Qadhafi and his masters the Crusaders of Washington. Be patient and steadfast, do not feel sad, and be strong with your faith against the affliction of captivity and the cunningness of US slaves, who are trying to repeat the experiment of Mubarak's executioners through unsuccessful and scandalous retreat and concessions in Libya. Tell Al-Qadhafi's dogs, agents of the world Crusade, that here are our brothers who have confronted your futile cunning by stabbing you and your masters in the chest. ...

Our Islamic nation in the land of steadfastness and jihad, here are your pious sons gathering under the banner of Islam and jihad to fight America, France, Spain, and their

sons. O nation of the land of steadfastness and jihad, stand by your sons so that we can conquer our enemies — Al-Qadhafi, Zine El Abidine, Bouteflika, and careless Muhammad (VI, Moroccan king) — and purge our lands of their slaves. Our Islamic nation, you might have realized that Islam is your strong fortress, your pride on earth, and your prize after life. The secular pan-Arabs like Al-Qadhafi and Mahmud Abbas have sold you out and turned you in to America and Israel. Therefore, I call on those secular people and pan-Arabs who still have little conscience and honor to rush to repent to God and adhere to the doctrine of monotheism, especially after it has become clear to everyone that those who used to say that they were ready to deal with the devil in order to liberate Palestine had sold out Palestine and became slaves to Satan.

An audio message by Abu Laith al-Libi accompanied the video of al-Zawahiri issuing the above remarks. In it, al-Libi asserted the Qadhafi regime had become an agent of U.S. interests. Further, he explained that he and his fellow Libyan jihadis were joining al-Qa'ida to continue their jihad focused on confronting infidels like Qadhafi:

It is with the grace of God that we fully understand Libya's importance to the West geographically, politically, economically, militarily, and in terms of security, and it was for this that the West, led by America, could not afford not to capitalize on this important spot in the crusader war it is waging on Islam and Muslims in the East and West. It was out of this importance that the West senses that they rushed to Libya and resolved, willingly or unwillingly, all their problems with the apostate regime in Libya, so that this regime may take its place among the regimes of collaboration and play its fitting role in championing the new crusader attack on the Islamic world. The Al-Qadhafi regime prepared itself to become a loyal soldier and faithful supporter of its crusader masters. Al-Qadhafi opened his doors to the Crusaders and changed his policies in order to please them, forgetting all enmities in order to bolster them.

Thus, Libya has become a secure den of the CIA, and its oil — of which its people were deprived — has started to flow to meet the needs of the armies of the cross in various arenas. The Libyan cities have become sites of attraction for the leaders of infidelity, who are harboring designs against Islam and Muslims day and night. It is with the grace of God that we were hoisting the banner of jihad against this apostate regime under the leadership of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which sacrificed the elite of its sons and commanders in combating this regime whose blood was spilled on the mountains of Darnah, the streets of Benghazi, the outskirts of Tripoli, the desert of Sabha, and the sands of the beach. The Group's leader lions are still imprisoned behind the bars of apostate criminals, rejecting deals and concessions. We ask God to bless them and us with steadfastness until death.

Continuing on this path, which our leaders and amirs have initiated; proceeding on the course of sacrifice and patience which opened the door for us; and adhering to the Group's method, whose features have become clear and whose basics are based on the Holy Koran and the teachings of the Prophet, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, as well as through understanding the method of the good ancestors and their imam followers in the past and present... for all the above we recite what the Prophet's companions said during the Al-Khandaq battle when they said that they were those who pledged to Muhammad to carry out jihad as long as they lived.

The imminent battle between the people of right and the people of falsehood will certainly take place, and the people of right should carry their weapons and ask for God's help to confront the enemies of God and His messenger, the apostates and their Jewish, Christian, and atheist supporters. They should enrich their minds with useful knowledge and good work. Based on all that, and from our religious duty to close ranks and agree, we announce that we have joined Al-Qa'ida of Jihad so that we may, with the grace and support of God, be faithful soldiers, gentle to Muslims but fierce against apostates. We shall raise the banner of monotheism and jihad that

was raised by our leaders and amirs, led by the sword of Islam,] Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin, may God watch over him, and may I redeem him with my life.

*We shall raise it anew over Libya side by side with our brothers of the Al-Qa'ida Organization in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, who took precedence in this virtuous action, and urged procession on this righteous path. ...*¹⁸⁷

It was widely reported this announcement was something of much larger organizational import: A merger of the LIFG with al-Qa'ida much like the GSPC's merger with al-Qa'ida a year earlier to create al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb. And later in November, AQIM issued a concise statement which indicated this was an accurate depiction of the matter: "We bless the [Libyan] Islamic Fighting Group on joining al-Qa'ida."¹⁸⁸

However, evidence suggests this is an inaccurate portrayal of the messengers' intentions. Of note, in April 2008 al-Qa'ida's then deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri was asked what he meant by his statement that the LIFG had joined al-Qa'ida. His reply: "I did not say that Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Muqatilah has joined Al-Qa'ida ... However, I said that a group of the notables of the Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Muqatilah has joined the Qa'idat al-Jihad Group. By this, I meant to please Muslims and break the hearts of the enemies of Islam."¹⁸⁹ Additionally, in July 2009 LIFG leaders living in exile in Britain addressed this misunderstanding of matters, explaining, "what has been said by Sheikh Abu-al-Laith al Libi, may God have mercy on his soul, concerning affiliation to the al-Qa'ida organization, if it was understood as such, was a personal decision that is at variance with the basic status of the group."¹⁹⁰ They added that "such important decisions necessitate the agreement of the members of the Shura Council."

Whether formally incorporated or not, the LIFG had for years played a substantial role in al-Qa'ida's history. And the group's military committee officials had even trained al-Qa'ida members who planned to participate in al-Qa'ida's operations targeting U.S. interests beyond Afghanistan or the Maghreb — including the 9/11 plot.

On January 28, 2008, Abu Laith al-Libi was killed in a drone strike in Pakistan's North Waziristan region.¹⁹¹ It seems his death at the hands of the Qadhafi regime's ally did not disrupt the negotiations between the LIFG and the regime.

In March 2008, a handwritten letter by LIFG emir Belhadj affirmed the LIFG was drafting revisions and participating in a dialogue with Libyan authorities.¹⁹² The same month, Ayman al-Zawahiri's book titled *Exoneration* was released via a jihadi website. In it, he lauded LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi, "a notable of the Libyan Fighting Group" who "has a commendable body of work in advocacy of the faith and religious sciences."

In April 2008, 90 LIFG members were released from prison after they pledged to renounce the use of violence.¹⁹³ According to a leaked U.S. diplomatic cable, 40 LIFG members were also released from prison in June 2008.

In July 2008, Noman bin Othman disclosed to the press that six of the LIFG's imprisoned leaders had been given access to special facilities and were developing a new set of "convictions" that entailed a condemnation of armed violence.¹⁹⁴ The group of leaders included LIFG emir Belhadj, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi, LIFG deputy emir Khalid al-Sharif, the LIFG's first emir Abd al-Salam al-Douadi, Abu Yahya al-Libi's older brother and founding member Abd al-Wahab al-Qayid, and LIFG military commander Mustafa al-Qunayfid (aka Abu al-Zubayr).

Although the regime had clearly made achieving reconciliation with Islamist groups a priority, late in August 2008 Sulayman Abd al-Qadir, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya, expressed dissatisfaction with the progress of this effort. He also chided the regime for its rapprochement with the U.S., decrying the \$2.7 Billion settlement with the victims of the 1988 bombing of PanAm Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland as an exhaustion of the Libyan people's treasury. Discussing the regime's efforts to achieve reconciliation with imprisoned Islamists, al-Qadir explained, "there is a national problem resulting from the way this regime ran things in Libya. We are

sensing the repercussions of this problem in the grave situation that exists at every level, be it in the economic, educational, cultural or health sectors. This situation is a clear indication of the problem, which is a general national dilemma that has affected everyone in our country. The problem, therefore, is not between us and a particular faction — as some might imagine — but is between the regime and the general public, including the Muslim Brotherhood, in Libya.”¹⁹⁵

Regarding the history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya, whose founders fled persecution in Egypt and were welcomed in Libya by King Idris, al-Qadir stated: “We are a Libyan Islamic movement that rose in our country over 50 years ago in explicit terms and with the involvement of well-known persons and leaders. It has always been primarily concerned with Libyan national affairs. The most important point for us is that the foundation of our ideology is Islam, which forms our people’s identity and cultural framework of reference.” Asked if the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya has a political platform, al-Qadir replied: “We have a clear vision of reform that is based on activating civil society. As for the integrated platform you mentioned, it is not enough to build a platform on a theoretical vision without a conducive atmosphere that would help materialize such detailed and integrated projects. The most important aspect of any reform project is society’s interaction with it. A reform project can be drawn up on paper, but will remain the sole property of the party that presents it and will reap no fruit if it is not transformed into a national project where everyone takes part. The safety valve for any reform project is social activism through civil society organizations that monitor and evaluate, through the integrity and independence of the judiciary, and through free press that guarantees transparency.”

Discussing the reconciliation efforts in Zurich in November 2008, al-Qadir dismissed the value of these efforts: “this remedy strengthens the foundations of hegemony. All the activities that took place, including new newspapers or forums or associations, sprang from one organization [the Qadhafi Development Foundation].

Therefore, despite our appreciation of the steps they took, this is a continuation of the policy of exclusion and marginalization. We think that serious steps must seriously aim at issuing a national constitution that expresses the real will of the Libyan people, strengthens the rule of law and independence of the judiciary, organizes the work of the security agencies to protect the country and respect the citizen, provides room for establishing and activating real institutions of civil society, and promotes a genuine and active role for the press and constructive national media, which serve public awareness and contribute towards exercising active national control.”¹⁹⁶

While the LIFG’s imprisoned leaders were negotiating with regime, it seems it was still business as usual for LIFG members abroad. On October 30, 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department designated three additional U.K.-based individuals for their roles raising funds for the LIFG.¹⁹⁷

On May 10, 2009, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi died while imprisoned by the Qadhafi regime. The Qadhafi regime claimed he committed suicide.¹⁹⁸ Weeks earlier, representatives of Human Rights Watch met with al-Libi at Abu Salim prison. They reported he angrily asked, “Where were you when I was being tortured in American prisons?”¹⁹⁹

In a lengthy message released in June 2009, LIFG member turned al-Qa’ida legal authority Abu Yahya al-Libi called on Muslims in Libya and throughout the Maghreb to “sincerely side with their mujahidin brothers in Algeria” and fight against the “infidel” governments. In it, Abu Yahya appealed directly to Libyans:

As for you, O youth of sacrifice in Libya, in Darnah, Bani Ghazi, Tripoli, Sabha, Hun, Ghad, Ghadamis, for 40 years you have been living under a rule that has made you suffer all kinds of pain and all sorts of distress. It killed your sons, displaced your youth, slaughtered your wise elders, mocked your religion, and made fun of your prophet. You were well known in Iraq and Afghanistan for your sacrifices and boldness. Your kin deserves the most your generous deeds, and you are the people of generosity. Be generous to them with your money, in obedience of God, and with

men seeking to please God. You should join forces with your brothers, put your efforts together and your opinion with their opinion, for the hand of God is with the community. ...

O heroes of the Islamic Maghreb, in Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco, this is the time for your uprising and the hour of your standing. Your enemy, despite its weakness, has made up its mind; so make up your mind. It has mobilized its troops; so mobilize your soldiers, fortify your ranks, unify your command, and convey with your patience, steadfastness, and accord a message to the infidels of the West and East saying: 'Go back to them, and be sure we shall come to them with such hosts as they will never be able to meet: We shall expel them from there in disgrace, and they will feel humbled (indeed).'²⁰⁰

Soon thereafter, Noman bin Othman met with LIFG leaders at Abu Salim prison. On July 2, 2009, Camille Tawil reported bin Othman learned the group's revisions were nearly complete. Bin Othman advised the LIFG leaders involved in this effort stressed that the "lawful research" examines "the armed action phenomenon at the international level, not only in Libya." He said they "want to play a role in stopping the shedding of the blood of Muslims and innocent people everywhere." Bin Othman added that they addressed "the line of excess and extremism in religion, those qualified to issue fatwas, the rules of takfir (labeling other Muslims as infidels) and of the lawful confiscation of money, as well as other issues of this kind. What is clear is that the research will deal with the practices of the al-Qa'ida organization, and it will present evidence that they are not religiously permitted."²⁰¹

According to bin Othman, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi said the work was the result of "convictions, not coercion."²⁰² However, discussing the authorship of this work in October 2011, al-Saadi revealed to journalist Camille Tawil that "The conviction is there but of course, they also put pressure on us. They wanted more but we rejected them. ... They wanted us to glorify [Qadhafi] and

we refused. We were subjected to many psychological and physical pressures."²⁰³

Days later, the LIFG's current and former members in Britain distributed a letter of support for imprisoned LIFG leaders' dialogue with the Qadhafi regime. The authors wrote: "a reading of the previous experience of the group clearly shows that the military action option has not fulfilled its objectives to lift the injustice besetting people and to realize the legal, lawful interests. Therefore, we support the group's decision to stop military acts inside Libya, and we adhere to its policy not to open any front abroad for any reason. ... the group has the exclusive right to revise its policy and to examine public interest as to whether confrontation is useful or not. The group's leadership is the most experienced and the most eager to militate and to offer sacrifices; they are also men of trust, loyalty, and adherence to commitment. ... we declare our support for the dialogue under way between the group's leadership and the Libyan regime if it should lead to an end to blood-letting, the release of prisoners, the spreading of security and justice, the reunion of families, and to permitting preaching, educational, and political activities."²⁰⁴ Meanwhile, they cautioned, "We reserve our lawful and natural right to oppose the regime if it does not turn its back on its previous policy that has led to tension and deadlock."

In addition to dismissing claims that the group had merged with al-Qa'ida in 2007, the authors noted the LIFG "was distinguished from others by adhering to the provisions of Islamic law and staying away from many erroneous practices like indiscriminate bombing tactics, the destruction of public and private property, and targeting civilians." They also called on governments which had designated the LIFG a terrorist organization to "revise their policies toward the group."

The following month, exiled LIFG Sharia committee member Abu-Suhayb al-Libi authenticated the letter. Asked if the LIFG would resume its jihad against the Qadhafi regime if the dialogue failed to yield results deemed favorable by the LIFG, al-Libi stated: "The group has halted military action since 2000 on the basis of a study and a

revision of the group's plan and an assessment of the possibilities of success and failure. This resolution preceded the surrender of the group's leadership to the Libyan regime by five years. Halting the military action was a result of an assessment of the situation, and was not the result of action and reaction. In the statement we point out in complete frankness and clarity that the military action has not achieved the aims of the group. The group will not carry out operations merely to assert its presence, satisfy its supporters and sympathizers, or for the sake of any such reason. However, we reserve our right to oppose the regime peacefully if we do not see a real change in its policies."²⁰⁵

Libyan cleric Sheikh Ali al-Sallabi, who was serving as a mediator between the Qadhafi regime and jailed LIFG leaders, reported in August 2009 that the LIFG had completed a nine-chapter, 421-page book which contained revisions to the group's doctrines. Al-Sallabi advised the press, "We are waiting at present for the opinions of scholars like Shaykh Salman al-Awdah, Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Shaykh Ahmed Raysouni from Morocco, and Hamzah Abu-Faris and Sulayman al-Bayrah from Libya and their assessment of these revisions from the Sharia angle before approving and printing it."²⁰⁶

The following month, on the 40th anniversary of the coup which propelled Qadhafi to the helm of power in Libya the LIFG's imprisoned leaders issued an apology to Qadhafi. They stated, "We seize this opportunity to congratulate you on the advent of the blessed month of Ramadan ... and extend on this occasion to you our apology for everything we had done against you, starting with the establishment of a secret organization and all the minor and major actions originating from it."²⁰⁷ Noman bin Othman advised Camille Tawil he did not believe all LIFG members outside of Libya would welcome the issuance of this apology.

On September 17, 2009, a Libyan newspaper reported the LIFG's imprisoned leaders had presented the Qadhafi regime the group's "revisions."²⁰⁸ Titled "Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Enforcement of Morality, and Judgment of People," the work was coauthored by

LIFG emir Belhadj, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi, LIFG deputy emir Khalid al-Sharif, the LIFG's first emir Abd al-Salam al-Douadi, Abu Yahya al-Libi's older brother and founding member Abd al-Wahab al-Qayid, and LIFG military commander Mustafa al-Qunayfid. The following day, investigative journalist Camille Tawil reported, "A source who is following the issue said that the 'revisions' include 'theological replies to the ideas of excessiveness, radicalism, takfir (branding other Muslims as infidels) and violence.'"²⁰⁹

In a report for The Jamestown Foundation, Camille Tawil later explained: "This massive document laid out in specific terms the ways in which they rejected any use of violence against the Arab and Muslim regimes and distanced themselves from al-Qa'ida and many of the actions commonly associated with bin Laden's organization. ... they made it clear from a religious point of view that it was wrong to launch a jihad against Arab regimes with the stated aim of overthrowing them and erecting Islamic governments in their place. The LIFG's leaders confessed to being mistaken in regard to their armed struggle against Qaddafi's decade's long rule during the 1990s. The Corrective Studies went on to make it clear that launching a jihad has many rules that should not be broken, listing many actions that contradict a genuine jihad. Although the leaders of the LIFG did not name al-Qa'ida or any other group in these pages, it was clear that bin Laden's organization and other groups associated with it were what they had in mind. The LIFG leaders were discussing the excesses in applying the concept of jihad, such as the killing of innocents, targeting Western civilians who visit Muslim states, and stealing money in order to finance jihad."²¹⁰

It would seem that journalists who were quick to report the work would come to represent a serious problem for jihadi groups may not have examined its contents very closely. In April 2010, Camille Tawil noted, "Parts of the Corrective Studies will assuredly sound alarm bells among many in the international community when they pronounce that jihad is an obligation on Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. The LIFG leaders argued that under any

ideology, not necessarily Islam, these three lands are occupied by foreign military powers and therefore must be liberated through resistance or violent jihad.” Moreover, Tawil advised, “The Corrective Studies are meant to ‘correct’ the path of true defensive jihad, not abolish it altogether.”

Indeed, one report on the work noted the following portion of text represented the most direct challenge to al-Qa’ida: “Jihad has ethics and morals because it is for God. That means it is forbidden to kill women, children, elderly people, priests, messengers, traders and the like. Betrayal is prohibited, and it is vital to keep promises and treat prisoners of war in a good way. Standing by those ethics is what distinguishes Muslims’ jihad from the wars of other nations.”²¹¹

M. Khayat, a researcher with the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), later explained, “The book’s nine chapters deal with key religious issues such as jihad, religious extremism, and takfir [declaring others to be apostates]. It prohibited waging active jihad against Muslim rulers, advising to focus the jihad on Islam’s external enemies.”²¹² Khayat noted that within the book’s introduction its authors wrote, “it has been the fate of the Islamic ummah in recent generations to face great conspiracies by its enemies, the Jews and Christians ... who conquered its lands, plundered its resources and desecrated its sanctities ... [In response,] many devout [Muslims] have attempted to contribute in one way or another to serving the religion and reviving the ummah. ... we wrote this book for the sake of every Muslim who sees the huge gap between what one finds in God’s book ... and the worrisome situation [experienced] today by some of the sons of Islam ... We wrote this book for every mujahid who strives for the advancement of his ummah, and is confronting the external conspiracies with his pen, tongue, money, weapon or prayers.”

Khayat reported the chapter on jihad “praises it in general but deals extensively with conditions and constraints on waging jihad. These include a prohibition on targeting women and children, and observations about respecting agreements and on the treatment of prisoners.”

Accordingly, “A large portion is devoted to a prohibition on fighting Muslim rulers and causing civil strife. Instead, the book advocates waging jihad against foreign occupiers of Muslim lands, naming Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan as the main arenas of jihad in our times. It should be mentioned that the book does not specify clearly whether contemporary Muslim leaders are considered believers or apostates, a distinction that is fundamental to the Salafi-jihadi doctrine.”

On March 23, 2010, the Qadhafi regime released 10 LIFG leaders, including LIFG emir Belhadj, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi, and LIFG military commander Khalid al-Sharif.²¹³ They were freed alongside more than 200 “rehabilitated” jihadis held at Abu Salim prison.²¹⁴ During the press conference that coincided with this prisoner release, Saif al-Islam lauded the LIFG’s revisions, claiming members of the group “were no longer a danger to society.”²¹⁵ Despite this view, many prominent LIFG members remained in prison.

The following month, during an interview broadcast by Al Jazeera TV Libyan cleric Sheikh Ali al-Sallabi discussed his work as a mediator in the dialogue between the Qadhafi regime and jailed members of Islamist groups like the LIFG.²¹⁶ He noted three of the LIFG leaders who authored the group’s revisions were still in jail alongside another 400 Islamists.

Thirty seven more Islamists and jihadis were released from prison on August 31, 2010. LIFG emir Belhadj reported only five of them were affiliated with the LIFG.²¹⁷ One of them was Abu Sufian Ibrahim Ahmed Hamuda bin Qumu. An al-Qa’ida member who was previously held at Guantanamo Bay, the Qadhafi regime reported bin Qumu had at one time served as Usama bin Laden’s driver, a claim which bin Qumu has denied.²¹⁸ Within a year, bin Qumu would be training rebel fighters in Derna.²¹⁹

THE PARADIGM SHIFTS

On February 15, 2011, anti-Qadhafi protests erupted in Benghazi in response to the arrest of human rights activist Fethi Tarbel. Attempting to quell the hostilities the

regime released more Islamists, including LIFG member Abd al-Wahab al-Qayid.²²⁰

A founding member of the LIFG, al-Qayid is one of the six authors of the LIFG's "revisions." In October 2011, al-Qayid told Camille Tawil he had been imprisoned by the regime since 1995.²²¹ It has been assessed the regime may have kept al-Qayid in prison to use him as leverage against his brother Abu Yahya al-Libi, a member of al-Qa'ida's Sharia committee who had repeatedly attacked the regime in his messages.

Qadhafi also dispatched Justice Minister Mustafa Abdel Jalil to eastern Libya to meet with protesters on February 15.²²² In 2010, Jalil famously threatened to resign due to the regime's unwillingness to release various political prisoners.

A month earlier, Qadhafi announced before the General People's Congress that he opposed additional releases of LIFG members, who Qadhafi called "heretics." He also asserted they were affiliated with al-Qa'ida and posed a threat to Libya's security.²²³ Qadhafi further asserted decisions regarding the group should be "left to the security agencies, not the judiciary." This position was reportedly in stark contrast with that of the regime's justice minister.

On February 16, 2011, Islamist gunmen stormed a military arms depot in Derna, seizing weapons, dozens of vehicles and hostages who they threatened to execute if the military did not halt its assault on nearby al-Baida. Joined by Army Colonel Adnan al-Nwisri, the group named itself the Islamic Emirate of Barqa. A Libyan official claimed members of al-Qa'ida were among the group's ranks.²²⁴

Protesters designated February 17 a "day of rage." It is the anniversary of the 2006 clashes in Benghazi in which Qadhafi's security forces killed protestors who attacked the consulate of former colonial power Italy after the Italian cabinet minister donned a T-shirt featuring recently published Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. The date is also commemorated in the name of the Benghazi-based February 17 Martyrs' Brigade militia organized by Islamist militant Ismail al-Sallabi, the brother of Qatar-based Libyan cleric Ali al-Sallabi, who would soon

become the "spiritual leader" of the Libyan revolution.

Soon after the uprisings erupted in Benghazi LIFG emir Belhadj and other LIFG leaders mobilized a group of revolutionaries under the banner of the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change (LIMC). Belhadj says the group was organized after a decision was made to disband the LIFG.²²⁵ Like the LIFG, the LIMC has reportedly been operating in London. According to the BBC, the group renounced violence and launched a political opposition campaign against the Gadhafi regime, and literature published on the LIMC's website asserted there is no "Libyan al-Qa'ida."²²⁶

On February 21, Justice Minister Mustafa Abdel Jalil, who had been leading negotiations for the release of hostages taken by the Islamic Emirate of Barqa, became one of the first major defectors from the Qadhafi regime. He cited the "excessive use of violence against government protesters" as the basis for his decision.²²⁷

The same day, in an appearance on Al Jazeera TV, Qatar-based Egyptian cleric and Global Muslim Brotherhood thought leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi called on Libyans to kill Qadhafi:

It is forbidden to obey the order of a human being in defiance of the Creator. If the army is ordered to attack the people with airplanes, I say that they must not do so. Rather, they should attack whoever gave them that order.

I hereby issue a fatwa to the officers and soldiers who can kill Mu'ammarr Al-Qadhafi: Whoever among them can fire a bullet at him, thus relieving the country and the people of him, should do so. This man wants to annihilate the people, so I am protecting the people.

*I rule that whoever can fire a bullet, and relieve us, as well as Libya and its great people, of this man's evil and danger, should do so.*²²⁸

Days later, al-Qaradawi restated his position on Qadhafi's regime in a lengthy sermon focused mostly on "the tyrant" that was broadcast live from Doha by Qatar's official state television network. He pronounced, "Anyone who likes Al-Qadhafi should give him this advice. This man

has lost his mind.”²²⁹ Regarding the momentum the revolution was developing, al-Qaradawi advised: “When this glorious revolution erupted in Libya, the son of Al-Qadhafi, the so-called Sayf-al-Islam, who is neither a sword (Sayf in Arabic means sword) nor a stick for Islam, said do not think that we are like Egypt or Tunisia, but we are tribes, which will fight and kill each other until we are annihilated. The denial then came to him immediately from the tribes. The tribes have joined the revolution.” Al-Qaradawi also called for Qadhafi and the regime’s military officials to step down and leave the country: “I call on all the free officers and all the honest ones, who were old comrades of Al-Qadhafi, to advise Al-Qadhafi, as his former Foreign Minister Abd-al-Rahman Shalqam advised him and said that Libya is bigger and greater than all of us. He said that King Idris (al-Sanusī) unified this country and therefore, we should not dismember it. I call on Major General Mustafa al-Kharrubi and his likes to advise Al-Qadhafi and to tell him that the revolution is victorious, the people are not with us, and that if we are wise, we should leave this country. They should adopt this position. If they do not adopt this position, their end will be hell in the hereafter and disgrace in this life. This is because their people will curse them. These positions against their nation, people, and tribes will chase them. The homeland should be above personal interests and relations.”

A close associate of popular Libyan cleric Ali al-Sallabi, al-Qaradawi declined the opportunity to lead the Global Muslim Brotherhood following the death of its Supreme Guide in 2004. The host of a television program broadcast from Qatar by Al Jazeera, he is regarded as one of the world’s most influential Islamists.²³⁰

By February 2011 Yusuf al-Qaradawi had amassed substantial wealth through his work as a Sharia advisor to many important Islamic banks and funds. Through his work in the financial sector, al-Qaradawi became the Sharia advisor to Al Taqwa Bank.²³¹ Believed to have funneled millions of dollars from the United States to support terrorist activities abroad, Al Taqwa is an association of offshore banks and money management firms with offices in Switzerland, Italy, Liechtenstein, and the Bahamas.²³²

Al Taqwa was designated by the U.S. Treasury Department in November 2001 for its role as a financier of terrorist organizations.²³³ According to the Treasury Department, “Al Taqwa provides investment advice and cash transfer mechanisms for al Qaida and other radical Islamic groups.”²³⁴ Soon after Treasury froze assets of various individuals and organizations affiliated with Al Taqwa in November 2001, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Department Jamie C. Zarate testified before Congress that “in 1997, it was reported that the \$60 million collected annually for HAMAS was moved to accounts with Bank al Taqwa.”²³⁵ In 2002, along with members of the bin Laden family and other prominent Arabs it was discovered al-Qaradawi was among Al Taqwa’s notable shareholders. (Note: Evidence of Al Taqwa’s support of terrorist groups has not been made public by the U.S. In August 2010, the United Nations Security Council removed Al Taqwa from a list of individuals and entities associated with al-Qa’ida.²³⁶ A leaked July 2009 cable from the Office of the Secretary of State reveals State was prepared to assist with the delisting of Al Taqwa, along with three other entities and two individuals from the UN’s list of al-Qa’ida-affiliated individuals and entities.)

As mentioned above, al-Qaradawi is also regarded as the spiritual guide of HAMAS.²³⁷ His Salafist-jihadi leanings are observable in his position that suicide bombings are justified provided they target Israeli Jews, including their children. As Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ian Johnson highlighted in his 2010 book on the history of the West’s dealings with the Muslim Brotherhood, “The argument, as explicitly set forth by Qaradawi, is that Israeli children grow up to be Israeli adults and thus are fair game.”²³⁸

Libyan Interior Minister Abd-al-Fattah Yunus defected the day after al-Qaradawi called on Libya’s soldiers to assassinate Qadhafi.²³⁹ Although widely criticized by Islamists for his alleged role in the 1996 massacre at Abu Salim, Gen Yunus would soon join the rebels as the TNC’s military chief.²⁴⁰ The day Gen Yunus defected, Qadhafi delivered a televised speech in which he vowed to hunt down protesters “inch by inch, room by room, home by home, alleyway by alleyway.”²⁴¹

In a statement released on February 23, 2011, exiled LIFG Sharia committee member Abu Suhayb al-Libi, who was living in Britain, criticized the regime for the continued imprisonment of the group's members. He denied the LIFG is part of al-Qa'ida.²⁴²

The same day, the LIMC released a statement in which it asserted the Qadhafi regime had lost control of most cities, and accused Qadhafi of bringing in foreign fighters to "carry out a campaign of genocide against the Libyan people, away from the eyes of the outside world."²⁴³ The group expressed anger over the West's failure to punish Qadhafi for his forceful response to the uprising, and singled out Italy as a friend of Qadhafi. In calling on the international community to intervene on behalf of the Libyan people, the LIMC acknowledged, "we are aware of the sensitivity of this call and the desire of our people not to see any foreign interference on Libyan soil." The LIMC further called on Libya's air force pilots to turn against Qadhafi and "cut off the head of the snake."

The following day, an al-Qa'ida ideologue known as Atiyatallah released a message focused on events in North Africa. Atiyatallah was an alias used by Libyan al-Qa'ida member Jamal Ibrahim Ashtawi al Misrati (aka Atiyah Abd al-Rahman), who, after reportedly becoming the terror network's deputy commander, was killed in a drone strike in Pakistan in August 2011.²⁴⁴

In the message titled "The Revolution of the Peoples and the Fall of the Corrupt Arab Regime," Atiyatallah asserted, "our Arab and Islamic peoples in Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Jordan, Yemen, and elsewhere are nowadays in need for someone to remind them of God and His laws. They are in need for someone who could gently help them gain wisdom from these global lessons. This would be an important role for the preachers, the knowledge-seekers, and the Islamic movements. ... The Egyptian regime fell and before it the Tunisian regimes, perhaps the Yemeni, the Jordanian, the Libyan, the Algerian, and the Moroccan regimes will suffer the same fate, God willing."²⁴⁵ He continued:

When I decided to publish this article, I received the

news of the start of the Libyan movement against the vile and lunatic tyrant and his family, who dominated the country and spread corruption in it, turning it into a property for them and their dogs. We ask God to rescue the people from them and to guide the Muslims in Libya to the right path, where the people of His Exaltedness will be glorified and the people of disobedience will be humiliated.

The same day, Agence France-Presse reported a Qadhafi regime official claimed al-Qa'ida had "established an emirate in Derna led by Abd al-Hakim Khalil al-Hasadi, a former Guantanamo detainee."²⁴⁶ The official claimed al-Hasadi's lieutenant in nearby al-Baida, Kheirallah Baraassi, was also a member of al-Qa'ida. Al-Hasadi refuted the claim he had established an emirate in Derna in a statement broadcast by Al Jazeera television the following day.²⁴⁷

A member of the LIFG, Abd al-Hakim Khalil al-Hasadi was never held at Guantanamo Bay, but he was detained by U.S. forces after being captured along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in 2001.²⁴⁸ The U.S. handed him over to the Qadhafi regime in 2004, which al-Hasadi says freed him in 2008.²⁴⁹ Al-Hasadi claims he was forced to move to Afghanistan after spending time in Jordan and Sudan because he was unable to attain visas to enter Europe.²⁵⁰ He admitted he had recruited jihadis from eastern Libya to support the insurgency in Iraq. He noted some of these recruits had returned to Libya and were fighting in Ajdabiya.²⁵¹

Discussing the fighters who had also participated in anti-Coalition operations in Iraq, al-Hasadi rejected claims that they are terrorists. "They are patriots and good Muslims," he said, adding: "I condemn the September 11 attacks, and those against innocent civilians in general. But members of al-Qa'ida are also good Muslims ..."²⁵² Regarding the U.S. response to the 9/11 attacks, al-Hasadi said he "did not like the attack by America (in 2001) because it was unjust" and "we hated the United States for what they did."²⁵³ He added that the rebels would accept help from the U.S., "but we cannot forget what happened."

It soon emerges that other LIFG and al-Qa'ida members had assumed prominent roles cultivating support for the rebellion. For instance, LIFG member Salah al-Barrani became a field commander in the group of fighters led by Abd al-Hakim Khalil al-Hasadi in Derna.²⁵⁴ Additionally, LIFG and al-Qa'ida member Abu Sufian Ibrahim Ahmed Hamuda bin Qumu, who the regime claimed had served as Usama bin Laden's driver, had become a trainer of rebel fighters from Derna.²⁵⁵ As noted above, prior to his extradition to Libya, JTF-GTMO analysts had described bin Qumu as a medium to high risk militant who was "likely to pose a threat to the US, its interests and allies."

Reports indicate LIFG fighters who had been living abroad returned to Libya to support the rebellion. A prominent LIFG member named Abd-al-Mun'im Mukhtar al-Madhun (aka Urwah), whose input jailed LIFG leaders Belhadj and Sami al-Saadi sought early on in their negotiations with the Qadhafi regime was among them.

In 2004, al-Madhun and other jihadis who fled Afghanistan following 9/11 were rounded up by the Iranians.²⁵⁶ Along with various al-Qa'ida members, he was released by the Iranians in 2010. After he was killed by the Qadhafi regime's security forces in an ambush on April 16, 2011 near Ajdabiya, a senior LIFG member said al-Madhun and other Libyan jihadis had returned from Iran once the uprisings began.

Noman bin Othman reported that after joining the revolutionaries in Libya, al-Madhun, who he says was married to an Algerian woman and belonged to a prominent family, worked under the TNC as the commander of the Umar al-Mukhtar Battalion.²⁵⁷ This 160-member rebel battalion is named for Sanusiyya military commander Sidi Umar al-Mukhtar, the so-called "Lion of the Desert" who was hanged on September 18, 1931 after helping lead a decades-long insurgency against Italian forces that had occupied Libya. (Umar al-Mukhtar is an iconic figure in Libya's history whose namesake has been invoked by al-Qa'ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri on numerous occasions while discussing Libyan concerns.)

Rebel militias seized control of Misrata after evicting

forces loyal to Qadhafi on February 24, 2001.²⁵⁸ In the coming days the UN Security Council would impose sanctions on Qadhafi and his family, referring the regime's crackdown on the rebels to the International Criminal Court. Various European governments approved sanctions against Qadhafi and his closest associates, and imposed an arms embargo and bans on travel to Libya.

On February 27, 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya issued a statement affirming its support of the interim government that was being organized by former Justice Minister Mustafa Abdel Jalil, "whose patriotic stances are highly appreciated."²⁵⁹ The Brotherhood asserted this new government should not be "subjected to any partisan or tribal considerations," demanding that it "should be formed by those who actually led the revolution on the ground. No one should be allowed to thwart the revolution." The Brotherhood further asserted, "The government should not include any members from the 1969 coup d'état or those involved in crimes perpetrated by [the] Al-Qadhafi regime against the Libyan people." The Muslim Brotherhood in Libya's leader, Sulayman Abd al-Qadir, who fled Libya in 1995, returned to the country in early May.²⁶⁰

Days before the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya issued its statement on February 27, Muslim Brotherhood officials in Egypt spoke out against calls for the West to intervene in Libya. Citing the U.S. invasion of Iraq, they claimed American involvement would be a dangerous step for Libya and the rest of the region, and said the Libyan people were "capable of overthrowing the regime."²⁶¹

On March 5, 2011, the Transitional National Council (TNC) met in Benghazi and declared itself the sole representative of Libya.²⁶² Days later, TNC Chairman Jalil advised: "As soon as the regime falls, we will have six or seven months to call elections. Until then, we will respect all international agreements. After the elections, everything will be left in the hands of the new leaders. We will leave. None of the current members of the Council will run in the elections. Libya is in need of new faces and there will be no room for officials from the old regime. Our basic text is the 1951 Constitution to which we are of course introducing changes."²⁶³

Although the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya expressed confidence in TNC Chairman Jalil, apart from its military campaigns the council would encounter challenges in rallying support from many Islamists due to their concerns about the number of former regime officials who had assumed key roles thereon. Mahmoud Jibril, who had been appointed prime minister of the rebel's governing body, was among the liberal former regime officials who would become a target of Islamist leaders' rhetoric. Aside from his past career as a prominent economic development officer within the Qadhafi regime, as the TNC's foreign minister Jibril played a key role securing support for the revolution from NATO, whose involvement in the revolution was not popular among Islamists. Ostensibly due to the chorus of criticisms directed at him from Islamist elements like Ali al-Sallabi, who would eventually assert a tremendous degree of influence over political aspects of the revolution, and possibly due to concerns he too might be assassinated, during the fall of 2011 Jibril resigned.

Although TNC Chairman Jalil's statement regarding the 1951 Constitution revealed the TNC's intention to make Islam the official state religion — a signal the West largely overlooked — during these early stages the TNC was not an overtly Islamist-leaning enterprise. And late in March the TNC issued a statement that suggested it intended to cooperate with the international community in combatting terrorism.

In its eight-point plan for the post-Qadhafi era titled "A Vision of a Democratic Libya" the TNC appealed to Western sensibilities regarding Islamist extremism. Section 7 of the plan is titled "Political democracy and the values of social justice." Part D of this section states the TNC intends to create, "A constitutional civil state which respects the sanctity of religious doctrine and condemns intolerance, extremism and violence that are manufactured by certain political, social or economic interests. The state to which we aspire will denounce violence, terrorism, intolerance and cultural isolation; while respecting human rights, rules and principles of citizenship and the rights of minorities and those most vulnerable. Every individual will

enjoy the full rights of citizenship, regardless of color, gender, ethnicity or social status."²⁶⁴

This plan was released a day after Qatar became the first Arab state to recognize the TNC as the legitimate government of Libya on March 28, 2011. Its release coincided with a conference held in London by 40 governments and organizations, during which the participants agreed to establish a Contact Group comprised of 20 countries that agreed to coordinate efforts in a post-Qadhafi Libya.²⁶⁵ During the London Conference on Libya it was announced Qatar would host the first Contact Group meeting.

On March 29, 2011, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Admiral James Stavridis and General Robert Kehler provided testimony regarding U.S. military operations in Libya before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. Asked by Sen James Inhofe about reports regarding the presence of al-Qa'ida members among the rebels and "those with whom we are associated," Adm Stavridis explained, "we're examining very closely the content, composition, the personalities — Who are the leaders? — in these opposition forces. The intelligence that I'm receiving at this point makes me feel that the leadership that I'm seeing are responsible men and women who are struggling against Colonel Qadhafi." He added: "We have seen flickers in the intelligence of potential al-Qa'ida, Hizballah — we've seen different things. But at this point I don't have detail sufficient to say that there's a significant al-Qa'ida presence, or any other terrorist presence in and among these folks. We'll continue to look at that very closely. It's part of doing due diligence as we move forward on any kind of relationship." Asked by Sen Inhofe if it would have been a good idea to determine if these linkages existed before taking any of the "steps we're taking," Adm Stavridis responded: "Well, I think that from the moment this crisis has unfolded, I think there has been a great deal of intelligence applied to this — although General Ham, as the AFRICOM commander, would be the best person to give you the details on that."²⁶⁶

During the London Conference on Libya, U.S.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was asked about Adm Stavridis' testimony regarding the presence of al-Qa'ida in Libya. She stated, "We do not have any specific information about specific individuals from any organization who are part of this, but of course we are still getting to know those who are leading the Transitional National Council."²⁶⁷

While the TNC downplayed linkages to Islamist elements, foremost influential Islamists also sought to allay mounting concerns that extremist movements might shape the post-Qadhafi era. Earlier in March, while calling on world powers to recognize the TNC as the legitimate government of Libya, impose a no-fly zone, and arm the rebels, Qatar-based Libyan cleric Ali al-Sallabi assured, "All these accusations by the Libyan regime that these young men are linked to al-Qa'ida are lies. I was supervising the dialogue with these young men. They want a modern civic state with an independent judiciary, the rule of law and government of institutions with a new constitution agreed on by all Libyans."²⁶⁸ Even Yusuf al-Qaradawi chided the regime for alleging al-Qa'ida was behind the revolution unfolding in Libya during his late-February sermon focused on Qadhafi. (While al-Qa'ida may not have played as central a role in mobilizing rebel fighters as Islamists affiliated with the LIFG or the Muslim Brotherhood, it is worth noting that both of these Muslim Brotherhood ideologues played key roles assisting the LIFG with the publication of its "revisions" that emphasized the importance of violent jihad.)

Meanwhile, al-Qa'ida's leadership was clearly trying to curry influence with Libya's rebels. On March 12, 2011, former LIFG member Abu Yahya al-Libi, whose brother had coauthored the LIFG's "revisions," released a message regarding the situation in Libya:

And now it is the turn of today's false prophet, the villainous liar, the affronter of the prophet, peace be upon him. He now finds himself between the jaws of the mill grinder, with Tunisia on the west and Egypt on the east. This comes after all that the Libyan people have suffered in oppression, mistreatment, and enslavement under his rule for more than 42 years ...

Noble people, with all your loyal tribes, continue your path, and with the aid of God, define your goal, renew your commitment, and head toward your aim without hesitation or discouragement. Toss Qadhafi off the cliff of humiliation. The price for any discouragement or hesitation will be greater humiliation and disrespect, which will last for decades. They will be darker decades than those you suffered for all those years. ...

This is a call to what is left of truthful Libyan scholars and well-meaning preachers, the loyal elite, the young people jealous [of their faith], to do their best to gain the best fruit from this revolution and not be taken advantage of after all these efforts and sacrifices by those traitors who go after their own interests and follow only their desires, who want to ride your efforts and exploit your blood. ...

Let your weapons be in your hands. Gather and store as much as you can. Beware. Beware of neglecting them or giving them up. ...

So let our Muslim people, who have lived and continue to live under myriad conditions of oppression, persecution, humiliation and fear, know that their true happiness and pure freedom lies in reverting back to Sharia and the path of God Almighty. ...²⁶⁹

In mid-April, Ayman al-Zawahiri called for the mujahidin of North Africa to support the revolution underway in Libya, mentioning the LIFG in his review of the injustices the Libyan people had suffered at the hands of Qadhafi and the Americans. Al-Zawahiri, who, according to Noman bin Othman, managed al-Qa'ida's Libya portfolio and required al-Qa'ida's North Africa franchise to seek his input on all matters pertaining to Libya, called for a regional insurgency against Western forces should they take part in the Libyan revolution: "I would like to alert my Muslim brothers in Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and the rest of the lands of Islam that if the United States and the NATO forces interfere in Libya, it will be necessary for their neighbors in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and the rest of the Muslims to go forth to fight all the mercenaries of Al-Qadhafi and the Crusaders of NATO."²⁷⁰

The following day, a message attributed to AQIM

spokesman Salah Abu-Muhammad claimed al-Qa'ida had established emirates in several Libyan cities, including Derna and Benghazi. In an interview with Camille Tawil, he noted, "We take pride in particular in the Derna Emirate and its honorable Emir Shaykh Abd-al-Hakim, who together with his brethren have formed the Islamic Council of the city to rule according to God's Sharia."²⁷¹ Asked what AQIM's position is on the role of Western forces in the conflict, Abu-Muhammad stated: "Our stance is what has been expressed by the honorable Shaykh Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri ... We do not at all find the intervention to be good; it is the beginning of the war, as Afghanistan is an example on this. I will explain our aims as a group with regard to the 'transitional infidelity council,' the criminal Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi, and Satan's coalition: they are our target, they are our enemies, and we will vanquish them wherever they are." However, days later it was reported an AQIM media official advised this message was a fabrication that was likely produced by Algerian intelligence.²⁷²

Several weeks later, on May 3, 2011 the London-based Saudi daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reported Colonel Muhammad Bani, the military spokesman for the Libyan rebels, stated the TNC was extremely happy about the news of bin Laden's death. Col Bani noted, "We want the Americans to do the same with Al-Qadhafi." He said the Libyan opposition was aware bin Laden fought against it, and had evidence al-Qa'ida sympathizers were actively fighting the rebels. He described bin Laden as an enemy of the Libyan opposition.²⁷³

In July, The New York Times interviewed a senior commander in the LIFG who used the nom de guerre "Abu Sohaib."²⁷⁴ Abu Sohaib emphasized the group is not part of al-Qa'ida. He mentioned, "It has been made very clear to them, that it is better for them to stay out of the country." He also told the Times, "We wanted to live in a country in which we can live and promote Islam the way it should be," adding: "We are sure Islam is good for everyone." Another LIFG affiliate using the alias Abu Salah, who reportedly travels between Europe and Libya, revealed the group's

members were mistrustful of Western interests in Libya: "We start to question the true intentions of the West in Libya." He asserted that if the West wanted to kill Qadhafi, "they could have done it several times," and remarked, "I guess this is about making as much money with oil and weapons deals as possible." Discussing the U.S. role supporting the rebels, Abu Sohaib pondered, "Isn't it interesting how they were hunting us for years and were working with Muammar el-Qaddafi?" He then revealed, "Now we are cooperating with NATO and the West, those who used to put us in jail." (Note: Kronos assesses "Abu Sohaib" may be the LIFG Sharia committee official who is also known as "Abu Suhayb." Meanwhile, our sources in Europe with access to the LIFG's former leaders reported the LIFG official using the alias "Abu Sohaib" in this interview was actually Belhadj, who may have been visiting Britain to raise support for the newly created Libyan Islamic Movement for Change.)

A boost for Islamist elements came late in July with the assassination of General Abd-al-Fattah Yunus, the commander of the TNC's rebel military forces who had been summoned to Benghazi to address allegations he was working as a double agent for the regime.²⁷⁵

Mohammed Agoury, a deputy of Yunus, told The Associated Press the February 17 Martyrs' Brigade was behind the assassination. According to Agoury, the Brigade, whose leaders were affiliated with the LIFG, targeted Gen Yunus for his involvement in the crackdown that crushed the LIFG's insurgency. The story of the assassination plot became rather murky when TNC Chairman Jalil refused to provide specific details regarding who was believed to be responsible, ostensibly seeking to prevent Gen Yunus' influential Obeidi tribe from turning against the TNC. He initially said Gen Yunus' body was not recovered; however, it was soon paraded through the streets of Benghazi with the bodies of two of his aides.²⁷⁶

Meanwhile, TNC finance and oil minister Ali Tarhouni repeated claims made by one of Gen Yunus' bodyguards that the secretive Abu Ubaida al-Jarah Brigade, whose members operated as a secret police force in Benghazi,

providing “internal security” services to the TNC, was responsible for the assassination.^{277 278} Tarhouni reported the militia’s leader had been arrested, but added it was actually one of the leader’s lieutenants who was responsible for Yunus’ death.²⁷⁹

TNC Chairman Jalil pledged to provide a thorough investigation, announced the formation of an ad hoc investigative committee to “learn the truth” of the assassination, and threatened to impose the “severest punishment against the perpetrators.”²⁸⁰

Several days later, Jalil dismissed the TNC’s entire executive committee. The 14-person committee consisted of the top officials who provided oversight of the TNC’s financial, defense, and communications concerns. Among the reasons for his action, Jalil cited “administrative mistakes,” including incompetence evident in the investigation of the Yunus assassination. Jalil then announced Prime Minister Jibril would select new members of the TNC’s executive committee, pledged to conduct a more thorough investigation of the Yunus’ death, and claimed the assassination was part of a larger “conspiracy.”²⁸¹ “A newly formed bureau would be entrusted with reviewing the ‘conspiracy’ that involved the assassination of General Younes,” he told the press.

The announcement that Mahmoud Jibril would appoint a new executive committee no-doubt angered Islamists. The Islamists’ malcontent with the involvements of former regime officials appeared to reach a boiling point with the assassination of Gen Yunus, who had allegedly overseen the 1996 massacre of 1,200 Islamist prisoners at Abu Salim prison. But in hindsight it may be seen that this was just the beginning of the power plays to be made by Libya’s Salafists and jihadis. Indeed, a month after Prime Minister Jibril was ordered to restructure the TNC’s executive committee by TNC Chairman Jalil, Ali al-Sallabi, who Qadhafi’s son Saif al-Islam had referred to as “the spiritual leader” of Libya’s Islamists in an interview with *The New York Times*, would call for his resignation, along with the resignations of various other liberal TNC members in a piece published by the influential Qatar-based Al Jazeera news network.²⁸²

In an interview with Al Jazeera on September 12, 2011 that was prominently featured on its website the following day, Ali al-Sallabi called Jibril and other liberal members of the TNC “secular extremists,” and claimed they were working to usher in a “new era of tyranny and dictatorship.”²⁸³ He was reportedly furious that PM Jibril refused to give the Muslim Brotherhood more than one ministerial portfolio in the government he was planning to create, leading TNC officials to speculate more assassinations may be forthcoming.²⁸⁴

What seems to have emboldened the Islamist trend most was not the assassination of Gen Yunus, but the emergence of former LIFG emir Abd al-Hakim Belhadj as a major power player in the revolution.

Weeks before Ali al-Sallabi told Al Jazeera that Libyans wanted a stronger representative than TNC Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril, on August 21, 2011 his friend Abd al-Hakim Belhadj leapt back onto the radars of Libya observers after fighters under his command laid siege to Qadhafi’s Baba az’ Azia palace in Tripoli. Through what another prominent rebel military leader described as an unanticipated power play, Belhadj, who had played almost no visible role in the revolution prior to this event, would become the rebel military leader of much of Tripoli, a role that offered him de facto military authority over a third of the country’s populace and a major stake of Libya’s wealth.²⁸⁵ Regarding Belhadj’s role in the revolution prior to the fall of Tripoli, one TNC official remarked, “He was nothing, nothing. He arrived at the last moment, organized some people but was not responsible for the military council in the mountains.”²⁸⁶ Yet based on Ali al-Sallabi’s accounts of the revolution it would seem that Belhadj had been quietly cultivating support among rebel fighters for months beforehand as, according to al-Sallabi, the two had spent a great deal of time “consulting” with rebel fighters together.²⁸⁷

Belhadj’s first public statements following the siege of Qadhafi’s Tripoli palace likened the defeat of Qadhafi’s forces in Tripoli to the conquest of Mecca.²⁸⁸ In what the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) has described as a “highly symbolic” interview, Belhadj

declared his rebel fighters “want security for our country and justice and prosperity for our people... for which we have been calling over the past 40 or 41 years.”²⁸⁹ MEMRI reported that when asked about the fate of Qadhafi and his son Saif al-Islam, Belhadj said, “They fled like rats before the rebels’ military advancement.” Qatari Staff Colonel Hamad Abdullah al-Marri accompanied Belhadj on the march into Tripoli on August 22 that was broadcast live by Qatar-based Al Jazeera.²⁹⁰

Approximately one week later, Belhadj accompanied TNC Chairman Jalil on a trip to Qatar, where they met with financiers of the revolution and NATO officials. On August 29, they urged NATO representatives and Western officials to extend NATO operations to protect civilians.²⁹¹ Additionally, Belhadj pledged he would disband the fighters under his command once Libya has a new government.²⁹² Ismail al-Sallabi, the brother of Ali al-Sallabi and leader of the 3,000-man February 17 Martyrs’ Brigade militia that is credited with defending Benghazi, was also a member of the delegation that met with NATO officials.²⁹³

The day following their trip to Doha, Jalil pointed to Belhadj’s participation in the meeting with Western officials in Qatar as evidence he was someone the council could trust. “He doesn’t pose a threat to the world’s safety,” Jalil advised.²⁹⁴ Jalil also acknowledged to The New York Times that he got to know Belhadj during the LIFG’s negotiations with the Qadhafi regime years earlier.²⁹⁵

On September 3, 2011, rebels discovered secret documents in the Tripoli offices of the regime’s external security forces that revealed the post-9/11 cooperation between the regime, MI6, and the CIA.²⁹⁶ These documents demonstrate how British and American intelligence organizations worked with the regime in coordinating the renditions of LIFG emir Belhadj and LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi (aka Abu Munthir), who were subsequently imprisoned at Abu Salim prison.²⁹⁷ Discussing these findings with investigative journalist Camille Tawil later in September, Belhadj remarked, “I believe that what I was exposed to was the direct result of what the CIA did. Now, it has been proved by these documents that the British Intelligence Organizations had

a hand in this issue. I have submitted my demands (an apology and compensation) because what happened was contradictory to the human rights to which these governments claim to be committed and these governments interfere in the affairs of other governments on the pretext that they do not respect human rights.”²⁹⁸ Days before these documents were discovered, Belhadj told The New York Times, “If one day there is a legal way, I would like to see my torturers brought to court.”²⁹⁹

Sami al-Saadi advised investigative journalist Camille Tawil that he was not tortured by the CIA.³⁰⁰ But he says he was subjected to both psychological and physical torture while held at Abu Salim prison, where two of his brothers were killed during the 1996 massacre that claimed the lives of some 1,200 Islamist prisoners. He was apparently rearrested after the revolution took shape, and freed from prison following the fall of Tripoli. Al-Saadi told the British press, “Whenever they felt I was withholding information they would beat me and subject me to electric shocks.”³⁰¹ In October, it was reported al-Saadi was suing various British governmental entities for their role in his family’s rendition to Libya.³⁰²

A week before his brother called for resignations of TNC officials in an interview with Al Jazeera, in an interview with Reuters February 17 Martyrs’ Brigade Commander Ismail al-Sallabi called for members of the TNC’s executive committee to resign. “The role of the executive committee is no longer required because they are remnants of the old regime. They should all resign, starting from the head of the pyramid all the way down,” he charged.³⁰³ He asserted, “There are secularists who have their own private agenda and would like to portray us as extremist to alienate us from the international community and cause the division that will only serve the tyrant.” Discussing his concerns regarding the recent decision to unfreeze some \$15 Billion in Libyan assets held abroad, Ismail al-Sallabi remarked that “lately” the executive committee had “done nothing but talk about unfreezing the assets.” He added these assets “were in the names of individuals in the old regime, so if you unfreeze the assets you unfreeze them in their favor. They belong to the Libyan people.”

Soon after the report on Ali al-Sallabi's calls for resignations from TNC officials appeared on Al Jazeera's website an anti-Islamist, anti-Sallabi rally held in Tripoli's Martyrs Square attracted only a few dozen demonstrators. The same day, The New York Times reported Abel al-Rajazk Abu Hajar, a Muslim Brotherhood figure, was leading the Tripoli Municipal Governing Council, in which Islamists were reportedly in the majority.³⁰⁴ The Times also noted that Belhadj "has become so much an insider lately that he is seeking to unseat Prime Minister Jibril, the American-trained economist who is the nominal prime minister of the interim government, after Mr. Jibril obliquely criticized the Islamists."

The Times further reported Adel al-Hadi al-Mishrogi, a prominent Libyan businessman who began raising money for the rebels early in the revolution, was "not convinced by the Islamists' declarations of fealty to democratic principles."³⁰⁵ He advised a well-organized Islamist umbrella group, Etilaf, has pushed aside more secular groupings. A TNC official confirmed for the Times that Etilaf was working hard to assert its influence, adding: "And we're hearing much more from the Islamists in the media because they are more organized and they are more articulate."

The Times reported Fathi bin Issa, a former Etilaf member who became an early representative of the Tripoli council, resigned after learning the Muslim Brotherhood members who dominate the body intend to ban theater, cinema and other arts, and had proposed issuing a fatwa to ban women from driving. Fathi bin Issa told the Times, "They were like the Taliban." He argued, "We didn't get rid of Qaddafi to replace him with such people." Regarding the revolution's spiritual leader Ali al-Sallabi, bin Issa advised, "He is just hiding his intentions. He says one thing to the BBC and another to Al Jazeera. If you believe him, then you don't know the Muslim Brothers."³⁰⁶

Earlier in September, 25 clerics and religious leaders met in Tripoli and established the Tripoli Ulema League. Reporting on the creation of this body, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat noted it had been organized "to stand up to what they described as the Islamists' control and their continued

attempt to dominate the daily tempo of life of the people of Tripoli."³⁰⁷ The piece continued:

As happened in Egypt in the wake of toppling the regime of deposed President Husni Mubarak, where the various stripes of Islamists spread their influence, Tripoli these days faces a new phase of its contemporary history, which poses a major challenge to all those who believed that toppling Al-Qadhafi's regime would usher in a serious and more democratic beginning in the country.

Libyan activists, writers, and media men have complained to Al-Sharq al-Awsat of what they described as the Inquisition (Mahakim Taftish) formed by the pro-Muslim Brotherhood groups, who now have the upper hand in running the affairs in the 17 February uprising coalition. A member of the coalition told Al-Sharq al-Awsat over telephone from Tripoli that the Islamists have quietly hijacked the 17 February uprising coalition's leadership, of which shaykh Ali al-Salabi is regarded as the spiritual leader. They pointed out that the Islamists' control has penetrated the first local council that was recently formed in Tripoli, triggering violent differences among the various political currents.

In addition to the Islamists' control of radio stations and the Awqaf Ministry, which controls and supervises all mosques in and outside Tripoli, the Islamists now control the main platform in the center of the Martyrs Square, which had previously been called the Green Square, where Al-Qadhafi's supporters used to assemble and demonstrate their loyalty, raise his photos, and applaud him.

It is no longer possible for anyone to speak from the Martyrs Square platform unless one gets permission from the Muslim Brotherhood leaders. This situation prompted some people to wonder whether the Muslim Brotherhood leaders have decided early to turn Tripoli into an Islamic emirate. Islamists now make great efforts to encourage women not only to wear hijab and Islamic garment and head cover, but also to wear veils as the supposed Islamic Sharia garment.

In expression of his rejection of the domination of the Islamists, the noted Libyan journalist and activists, Fathi

Bin-Issa, decided to resign his post as official in charge of media and culture in the Tripoli's local council, which is headed by Abd-al-Razzaq Abu-Hajar. This step followed his revelation to Al-Sharq Al-Awsat yesterday that he had received death threats because of his position that opposes the Islamists' efforts to control the capital Tripoli.

As the Muslim Brotherhood was consolidating political authority in Tripoli, Belhadj was busy politicking with the leaders of various militias which had participated in the operation that forced Qadhafi from the Libyan capital. On September 11, 2011, rebel militia leaders met at an Islamic institute in Tripoli. Their negotiations focused on establishing a unified military command were interrupted by the arrival of Belhadj, who was accompanied by Qatar's chief of staff, MajGen Hamad Ben Ali al-Attiyah. According to news reports, Belhadj reportedly advised the others: "You will never do this without me."³⁰⁸ While he later disputed the accuracy of this account, it soon became apparent that other rebel military leaders were displeased with Belhadj's new role in Tripoli.

Abdullah Naker, who claims his fighters played a far more pivotal role in the siege of Tripoli, portrayed Belhadj as a stooge of Qatar. CNN reported Naker's view of Belhadj is shared by other prominent militia commanders.³⁰⁹

Secularist revolutionaries had accused Qatar of attempting to prop up Islamists as the heirs apparent to the helm of power in Libya. It later emerges that Qatar provided Libyan rebels an estimated 20,000 tons of arms, which appear to have been conspicuously placed in control of Islamist rebel fighters like Belhadj and Ismail al-Sallabi. Qatar was also reportedly funneling financial assistance directly to Belhadj's militia.

Apart from demanding apologies from MI6 and the CIA for their involvement in rendering him to Libya in 2004, in an interview with Camille Tawil published on September 19, 2011, Belhadj discussed the revolution at length. Asked about his vision for political system after the fall of Qadhafi, Belhadj asserted "the previous course of the Islamic Fighting Group (changing Al-Qadhafi's regime) is the course that represents the wishes and aspirations of the

Libyans."³¹⁰ Asked if he would be content with a secularist government, Belhadj replied: "We do not have a problem, but perhaps others might have (a problem with the Islamists). Now, we have started to breathe the new air of freedom. I hope that what the Libyans have lived during this short period will be a motive for preventing an irresponsible behavior related to the exclusion or other issues. We have been and we will continue to confront exclusion tendencies that always claim that the Islamists impose dangers on the society, and have intentions that lead to instability and to threats to the security of the country and of the region, and so on. These claims are not true. We will not behave in any other way than to further the security of the country first and the stability of the region second, and we will have equal relations with all, which will be based on mutual respect and joint interests."

Days earlier, responding to the question of whether he agreed with his friend Ali al-Sallabi's demand for TNC Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril's resignation, Belhadj remarked, "What is more important is that the outcome of this should serve the interest of the nation, this is what concerns us. I believe that these comments have reached Dr. Jibril and many of those who were given tasks, and they welcomed these comments and received them with an open heart and not in a bad or negative way, hopefully."³¹¹

Discussing the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change, Belhadj did not offer many details about its agenda, stating simply that "the magnitude and form of the role will wait until after the liberation of Libya, and the formation of an interim government. When the Libyans enjoy stability, they will think of the ways of political actions and coalitions."³¹² Asked if the LIMC intended to coordinate efforts with the Muslim Brotherhood in preparation for the upcoming elections, Belhadj related, "We still are in the stage of thinking of the way of political participation, and we have not established this yet. We still are fighting a liberation and security war. However, as a whole, we consider that we ought to pursue making the rule of Libya in the hands of people who enjoy impartiality, sincerity, and commitment to the country's destiny and gains, and to serve the people.

These people might have tendencies, with which we might agree, and we share with them the fact that they are Muslims, whether they are from an organizational or partisan framework; we welcome this.” He declined to comment on whether he believed NATO’s involvement was permitted under Sharia.

On September 20, 2011, Al Jazeera reported that when asked about the role he will play in Libya once the fighting stops Belhadj replied, “I’ll be what the Libyan people will ask me to be. My future role is still to be decided upon in the coming period. I don’t care whether my role will be political or military...”³¹³ The following day, The Irish Times reported that when asked if the LIMC might become a political party Belhadj replied, “Why not?”³¹⁴ Discussing his predictions about which parties will be most successful in the post-Qadhafi era, Belhadj stated: “The Libyan people belong to a conservative society, with its own traditions and culture. Nationalists, who have integrity and concern for the country, and are trustworthy, will be the ones chosen.”

In an interview with The Jamestown Foundation, LIMC political committee member Anis al-Sharif advised there are indeed doctrinal parallels between the LIFG and the LIMC. Accordingly, the majority of LIMC members “genuinely” believe in the views expressed in the LIFG’s Corrective Studies.³¹⁵ It is not clear if the LIMC’s members also embrace the contents of LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi’s book that outlined the method of the LIFG. Published on the group’s website, the work emphasizes the importance of jihad, a term which appears more than 80 times in the 172-page document.³¹⁶

In October, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi spoke with Camille Tawil about the revolution. Asked if the LIFG’s Corrective Studies were still applicable, al-Saadi replied: “We tied the issue of banning confrontation with the state to good and evil. I do not think it is right or correct now to open these studies and address the revolutionaries by telling them: Do not raise arms. They were in a self-defense position. The revolution began as peaceful. The people took to the streets to tell Al-Qadhafi we do not want you. They said this with their voices and bare chests. He

surprised them with anti-aircraft guns and tanks; that is, with violence. Thus, they were defending themselves. It would be wrong and naive of us to tell them: Do not defend yourselves. I say this so that the corrective studies would not be taken as absolute words at any time and in any place. This issue (confrontation of the state) is tied to good and evil. This is the opinion of the majority of religious scholars.”³¹⁷ Al-Saadi reported the LIFG had declined Usama bin Laden’s invitation to join what would become al-Qa’ida. “We did not wish to become involved in an external issue,” he explained. He also advised: “We have a different opinion from that of al-Qa’ida. Anyone who lived in Kabul during that period knows that the LIFG is not convinced of al-Qa’ida opinions and its modus operandi. We do not think that the presence of al-Qa’ida in Libya now serves the cause of the Libyans.”

When asked by Camille Tawil about the role of NATO in the revolution, Sami al-Saadi expressed gratitude for the West’s interdiction of Qadhafi’s assault on Benghazi, but advised he rejects the West’s presence in Islamic countries:

In 2001, I saw the mistakes that NATO and the coalition forces committed in Afghanistan with my own eyes. The one that sees is not like the one that hears. I saw these mistakes not once or twice but hundreds of times. I saw trucks and buses transporting men and women being bombed. I saw that on the road from northern Kabul to Panjshir. I saw with my own eyes the bloodstained clothes of men and women in bombed passenger buses. I also saw a packed bus being bombed in Kandahar. I saw a village on the outskirts of Kandahar totally destroyed and with hundreds killed. What would your position have been if you were in my place regardless of your ideological convictions? What was the guilt of these people? However, in the intervention in Libya, God spared the Libyans many ordeals. You have heard the threat that Al-Qadhafi made against Benghazi. What if his brigades had entered the town? God Almighty blinded his eyes and delivered speeches in which he showed how bloodthirsty he is. Many politicians, including western politicians, became

convinced that this man is a real threat to Europe and not just to the Libyans. However, even if we justify this intervention, we reject the permanent presence of western forces in Islamic countries whether in Iraq or Afghanistan or Libya or anywhere else. You (NATO) came to help and I should thank you because you were instrumental in sparing the blood of hundreds of thousands of Libyans. However, establishing bases, for instance, or undermining sovereignty will cause problems to us and to anyone that wishes to establish bases on our land. As far as we are concerned, I do not believe that any revolutionary would accept this regardless of his ideology.

Discussing the political atmosphere in Libya with Camille Tawil in October 2011, LIFG leader Abd al-Wahab al-Qayid, the brother of Core al-Qa'ida Sharia official Abu Yahya al-Libi, advised he looked forward to "an end to the chapter of oppression and subjugation."³¹⁸

On October 19, 2011, TNC Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril shared with Time magazine his intention to resign, but he did not share a date for his planned departure from the office.³¹⁹

The following day, after Qadhafi's convoy was hit during a NATO airstrike outside of his hometown Sirte, a Misrata-based rebel group captured him. Although reports about Qadhafi's subsequent death are conflictive, footage of Qadhafi's captors beating and taunting him, coupled with accounts provided by standers-by indicate he may have been executed by the rebels who captured him.

The bodies of Qadhafi and his defense minister were put on public display in a refrigerator in the port city of Misrata for four days. Qadhafi was then buried in an unmarked grave at an undisclosed location.

Prime Minister Jibril resigned on October 22.³²⁰ The day following his resignation, TNC Chairman Jalil announced Libyan law will be based on Sharia: "We, as an Islamic state, determined that Islamic law is a major source for legislation, and on this basis any law which contradicts the principles of Islam and Islamic law will be considered null and void."³²¹

Abdurrahim al-Keib would succeed Jibril as the interim prime minister, receiving 26 of 51 votes from members of the TNC.³²² The announcement of his election came hours before NATO's mission officially ended in Libya.

Al-Keib had spent most of his life abroad, working as an academic in the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates. He had never served as a member of the Qadhafi regime, and reportedly enjoys stronger support among rebels in Tripoli than TNC Chairman Jalil, whose support base is in Benghazi.³²³

On November 22, 2011, al-Keib announced his appointments for his cabinet, asserting "All of Libya is represented."³²⁴ To the surprise of some onlookers, al-Keib appointed Osama al-Juwali to serve as the TNC's defense minister. Reporting on the appointments, Al Jazeera noted that in forming the new government the TNC "faced the tricky task of trying to reconcile regional and ideological interests whose rivalry threatens to upset the country's fragile stability."³²⁵

When Belhadj was reportedly passed over for the role of defense minister onlookers speculated about whether the TNC would be targeted by Islamist militants. Yet Belhadj would soon advise he turned down the offer to serve as defense minister due to his interest in assuming a less military, more political role in the post-Qadhafi era.³²⁶

Meanwhile, recent events had thrust another militia commander into the limelight just days before this important announcement was made. The weekend prior to al-Keib's announcement of his cabinet appointments fighters led by Osama al-Juwali, a militia commander from Zintan, captured Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam as he attempted to flee to Niger. They would hold him in Zintan and demand he face trial in Libya.³²⁷

On November 24, 2011, rebel fighters from Zintan also detained Belhadj as he attempted to board a flight at Tripoli International Airport, where Zintan's militiamen provide security.³²⁸ The Zintan Brigade had become a key rival of Belhadj's Tripoli Military Council by this time. And Defense Minister al-Juwali is among the rebel military commanders who have asserted Belhadj's role in the siege of Tripoli did

not merit the support he subsequently received from TNC Chairman Jalil.

Reports indicate Belhadj was arrested en route to Turkey because he was carrying a false passport, and that TNC Chairman Jalil demanded his release.³²⁹ Jalil told reporters Belhadj was on an important mission to visit wounded rebel fighters receiving care in Turkey.³³⁰ It soon emerged that Belhadj's mission was less humanitarian in orientation than was previously declared by authorities in Libya.

Days after his arrest, the British press reported Belhadj had actually traveled to Turkey to meet with Free Syria Army leaders in Istanbul and on Syria's border with Turkey.³³¹ The source of this account shared that Belhadj had discussed the prospect of sending troops to train Syrian revolutionaries. It was also reported that Turkish officials participated in the meetings between Libya's delegates and Syrian oppositionists, who had visited Libya earlier in the month to hold preliminary meetings focused on channeling arms to Syrian fighters.³³² The previous month, Libya's TNC became the world's first government to acknowledge the Syrian National Council as the country's legitimate government.³³³ An official from Belhadj's Tripoli Military Council was quoted as saying, "Bashar sent Gaddafi weapons when he was fighting us. There are hundreds of people who want to go to fight in Syria, or help in other ways if they can."³³⁴

Qatar has also supported organizations which seek regime change in Syria. And on November 25, 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameron and his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani met in Oxfordshire and discussed Arab Spring-related developments. Downing Street reported they pledged to continue dialogue with Syrian opposition groups in order to support a transition to a stable democracy in Syria.³³⁵

In an interview conducted days after he was arrested by Zintan's rebel militiamen at Tripoli International Airport, Belhadj indicated the Tripoli Military Council would be supportive of Libya's interim government: "I hope that it (the new government) will be granted all the support needed for it to carry out its tasks. I am aware of certain

opinions accusing it of being imbalanced in terms of representing all regions, but we hope that it would be allowed to carry out its duties to render the country stable and secure."³³⁶ He continued, "As revolutionaries, we are concerned with supporting this government and all the ministers including the defense minister. We will coordinate and cooperate with the defense ministry ... Our relationship with the defense minister is good." Discussing plans for disarming of rebel fighters under his command Belhadj advised, "It is not on our agenda right now. This is a two-sided solution ... We call on the government to recruit the revolutionaries into the ministries and public institutions," adding: "We have to wait for the plans and programs of the relevant ministries and the corresponding plans and programs to be initiated by the revolutionaries."

Regarding the heavily armed militias, earlier in November TNC Prime Minister Abdurrahim al-Keib advised, "We will not force people to take quick and hasty decisions and actions and come up with some laws that just prevent people from holding arms."³³⁷ Meanwhile, TNC Chairman Jalil told the press the new government would require access to the billions of dollars of Qadhafi regime assets still frozen abroad in order to offer the incentives that would be required to demobilize these groups.

Then, in early December, the TNC vowed to disarm Tripoli by the end of 2011.³³⁸ Whether or not this announcement signifies top interim government officials' intentions to reduce Belhadj's influence in Tripoli remains to be seen.

THE NEXT CAMPAIGN AWAITS

Weeks before he was arrested by rival militiamen at Tripoli International Airport, Belhadj reportedly endorsed the new political party Ali al-Sallabi formed for Libya's 2012 elections. The party's name, The National Gathering of Freedom, Justice, and Development, is said to be a nod to both Turkey's ruling party, the Justice and Development Party, and the party organized by the Muslim Brotherhood in neighboring Egypt, the Freedom and Justice Party. Discussing the party's platform, Ali al-Sallabi, an outspoken critic of secular liberals serving in the TNC, said that "This

is not an Islamist party but a nationalist party.” He then acknowledged the party’s “political agenda respects the general principles of Islam and Libyan culture.”³³⁹ Ali al-Sallabi also said he would not run for president.

Late in November, Belhadj remained guarded when discussing the details of political maneuvering many anticipate from him and his Qatar-backed associates like Ali al-Sallabi. Asked about his interests in politics he coyly remarked, “Of course I am also interested in the coming elections just like any other Libyan who is interested in and follows Libyan affairs. We are preparing and are getting ready for the future political project.”³⁴⁰

A Salafist tide is on the rise in North Africa as Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated political groups attract voters to their “moderate” platforms. Since the TNC’s announcement late in October that Libya had been liberated from Qadhafi’s autocratic rule, Islamist parties in neighboring Tunisia, followed by Egypt, have dominated popular elections. The founders of Tunisia’s leading Ennahda Party were inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, and the party is understood to be the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia.³⁴¹ Although they were aligned with extremist movements during the 1980s, Ennahda’s leaders now prefer to liken their party to Turkey’s leading party while overtly advocating for an Islamic identity and society in Tunisia.³⁴² In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party has led recent elections, trailed by the even more conservative Salafist Al-Nour Party, which has received substantially higher votes than any of the country’s secularist parties.³⁴³

Still, the revolution in Libya was markedly different from the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in that its success was ultimately achieved through the mobilization of an armed insurgency. In eastern Libya, jihadis affiliated with terrorist groups like the LIFG and al-Qa’ida played prominent roles leading rebel fighters against the Qadhafi regime’s forces. And with support from the conservative Muslim country Qatar, a prominent jihadi who once led the LIFG assumed command over one of the country’s largest contingents of rebel fighters.

Various commanders of ex-rebel fighters — many of

whom are reportedly Islamists — are among the country’s political aspirants, with Tripoli Military Council chief Abd al-Hakim Belhadj perhaps foremost among them. Thus a key question that remains to be answered is: Will Libyans reward fighters like Belhadj with their votes?

Belhadj expressed concerns about the TNC’s management of political affairs in an oped published in Britain late in September 2011. In it, he wrote, “Our uprising marked a historic turning point; we had waited a long time and made many sacrifices for it. I remember my friends and comrades in struggle whom the Gaddafi regime killed, and the many martyrs of our people who had refused to submit to the regime’s oppression and its security agencies. The spirit of these heroes continues to remind us constantly of the need to attain justice in Libya and avoid betraying the ultimate sacrifices that they made.” Addressing the TNC’s exclusion of Islamist elements among the interim government’s top decision makers, Belhadj advised, “What worries us is the attempt of some secular elements to isolate and exclude others. Libya’s Islamists have announced their commitment to democracy; despite this, some reject their participation and call for them to be marginalised. It is as though they want to push Islamists towards a non-democratic option by alienating and marginalising them.”³⁴⁴

Although many Libya observers assert the Libyan people are mostly conservative, Islamists have not been provided a substantial presence within the TNC. While prominent Libyan revolutionary personalities like Ali al-Sallabi and Belhadj have often expressed frustrations over this situation, moving forward this dynamic could actually play to their favor.

Given the immensity of the tasks ahead in the short run for the TNC, even the most minor errors can be used by Islamists to portray liberal technocrats as inept or apathetic when it comes to fulfilling the expectations of the average Libyan. Furthermore, if the TNC fails to produce a constitution which reflects the Islamic values many observers say are embraced by most Libyans, the Islamist cause could become all the more attractive to even truly moderate groups. On the other hand, if this constitution is

sufficiently conservative it could reduce the legitimacy of any secular political movements. And when taking into account the levels of financial support one can safely forecast will flow in for Islamist parties from conservative Gulf states, it seems secularist liberal candidates will already be operating at a comparative disadvantage.

It is logical to anticipate increased coordination of political activities between Salafist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya and jihadist groups such as Belhadj's Libyan Islamic Movement for Change. Policy makers should remain attentive to these developments. For, in terms of U.S.-Libya relations, if these elements are able to write the next chapter of Libya's history it may indeed be one which is just as fraught with conflicts of interests as the chapter written by Qadhafi.

Identifying just what the coalescence of these interests within Libya may mean for the future requires more than an understanding of the deeply anti-Western agendas of jihadis like Belhadj alone. It is also important for officials to take a careful look at the Muslim Brotherhood, whose platform is poised to curry influence in the upcoming elections in Libya.

Presented with the assertion that the Muslim Brotherhood is a vehicle for the spread of Islamist extremism some Arabists are quick to point out that the Muslim Brotherhood is not a monolith. But all too often analysts who highlight this fact limit their juxtapositions of the views expressed by Muslim Brotherhood thought leaders like Yusuf al-Qaradawi to comparisons with more nuanced views expressed by Brotherhood operatives within Western academic spheres. In so doing, they leave observers with the notion that al-Qaradawi's views reflect the utmost extremes of the Brotherhood's doctrine, overlooking the fact that comparing al-Qaradawi's views with those of the Brotherhood's leaders in places like Yemen will also demonstrate their point — even if at the same time demonstrating not all MB figureheads are at odds with al-Qa'ida. Indeed, it will be interesting to monitor the

Muslim Brotherhood in Libya to determine if its leaders demonstrate the same respect for al-Qa'ida affiliates as the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen's leaders have extended them. This, despite the criticisms of al-Qaradawi and the Brotherhood which have been issued by al-Qa'ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

As it is common for the Muslim Brotherhood's public relations representatives to describe the Brotherhood as moderate, it is important for officials to remain mindful that what may constitute a moderate Islamist view in the Middle East may very easily be categorized as extremist here in the West.

Like the LIFG's leaders who authored the group's *Corrective Studies*, the Muslim Brotherhood is not focused on waging a global jihad. Meanwhile, like the *Corrective Studies*, a work that a political officer from the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change has said is embraced by the new group's members, the Muslim Brotherhood's leaders support waging violent jihad against foreign "occupiers" in Iraq, and against Israel. Ultimately, as Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ian Johnson notes in his 2010 book that chronicles the open source features of Western governments' calamitous collaborations with the Brotherhood, the Brotherhood's support of jihad in Israel and Iraq means it explicitly endorses terrorism.³⁴⁵

Just as policy makers and national security managers should diligently scrutinize the markers which offer insights of former LIFG leaders' political ambitions they should also carefully assess the extents to which our own interests will permit us to work with Salafists in Libya. Moreover, they may also want to carefully consider whether some of the Salafist-jihadis who are assuming prominent roles in Libya should also be labeled foreign terrorists, and apprehended. That is, before these extremists secure the resources needed to advance their jihad to the next logical stage, which could entail mobilizing violent extremists for operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and possibly Europe and elsewhere in the West.

QUESTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

The following is a set of questions Kronos assesses may be useful to policy makers when discussing Libya-related concerns with representatives of defense and intelligence organizations.

Is the administration providing the intelligence community the resources needed to fully manage our interests in Libya and elsewhere in North Africa?

What are our current interests in Libya and elsewhere in North Africa? What changed since the Arab Spring?

Should the LIFG remain on the FTO list?

Given that the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change appears to be the LIFG with a different name, should the LIMC be placed on the FTO list?

Has the presence of al-Qa'ida-affiliated militants grown in Libya since the revolution began?

Has intelligence indicated Belhadj is among the rebel commanders who coordinated operations with al-Qa'ida members during the revolution?

To what extent is the TNC demonstrating a willingness to cooperate with U.S. counter-terrorism operations?

It has been reported that a flag bearing al-Qaida's brand has been flown above a courthouse in Benghazi. Are members of al-Qa'ida openly working to establish emirates in Libya?

Have any al-Qa'ida members been captured in Libya since the revolution began? If so, has the TNC provided Western intelligence access to them?

Has the TNC welcomed covert efforts to prevent the trafficking of arms in Libya to groups which target Americans and our allies in the Middle East and Africa?

Reports indicate weapons smuggled out of Libya could be used in attacks on Israel. What kinds of weapons have terrorist groups seized during the revolution, and have any of these weapons been used to attack Americans and our allies?

What is known about the smugglers and smuggling routes of the arms?

What happened to Libya's chemical and biological weapons stockpiles?

Is it likely that Libyan Islamists will receive the same levels of popular support that Islamists have garnered in elections in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt?

What is the role of tribalism in Libya?

Should the U.S. encourage a power-sharing equilibrium between the major Libyan tribes?

Given that Libyan Islamic radicals were heavily involved in the jihad in Iraq against U.S. and coalition forces, should we be concerned about Libyan volunteers being sent to Syria to fight with rebels against the Syrian government?

Should they claim power in Libya's upcoming elections, is it assessed Libyan Islamists may either officially or unofficially offer up Libya as a safe haven for wanted terrorists like Abu Yahya al-Libi and other members of al-Qa'ida?

Should they claim power in the country's upcoming elections, is it assessed Libyan Islamists may either officially or unofficially provide support to HAMAS and other terrorist groups which target Israel?

Should they claim power in the country's upcoming elections, is it assessed Libyan Islamists may either officially or unofficially provide support to jihadi groups which target American interests in Afghanistan and/or Iraq?

Is Libya's Maliki school of Islam influenced by Wahabbism or Salafism? Please define the difference.

How compatible is the Maliki school of Islam with radical schools of Islamic thought embraced by violent extremist movements?

Are Ali al-Sallabi's views as extreme as those espoused by Yusuf al-Qaradawi?

What is known about relations between Ali al-Sallabi and the leaders of HAMAS?

Is Libya a likely new venue for the growth of violent extremism?

Does the Global Muslim Brotherhood's agenda entail the establishment of a veritable caliphate in North Africa?

Does the Global Muslim Brotherhood intend to establish entities similar to HAMAS in North Africa that will be used to militarily advance Salafist interests in Africa?

Should Belhadj and other LIFG members stand trial for the roles they have allegedly played supporting the Taliban and al-Qa'ida?

What is the role of the British government in dealing with Libyan Islamic radicals?

Should frozen Libyan assets be returned to Libya if LIFG members become part of the government?

A TIMELINE OF EVENTS

In 1853, Algerian born 19th Century Islamic revivalist leader Sayyid Muhammad Ibn al-Sanusi establishes his zawiya (place of learning) at Giarabub (Jaghbug) in eastern Libya. Educated in Islamic Sufism at Fez and Islamic orthodoxy at Mecca, al-Sanusi's teachings famously attracted students to Libya from across North Africa and Arabia. He establishes a religious order known as the Sanusiyya, which is heavily influenced by the fundamentalist Wahhabi order of Saudi Arabia. Following the death of al-Sanusi in 1859, the Sanusiyya evolve from a religious brotherhood into a political and commercial enterprise with military support from the Bedouins of Libya's interior and acceptance from the Ottoman Turks who ruled from Libya's coast. Al-Sanusi's son Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi increased the number of Sanusi lodges throughout southern Libya and northern Chad, thereby expanding his filial influence over merchants and the faithful.

Following France's advance into southern Libya just after the turn of the century, the Sanusiyya's symbiotic relationships with Libya's Bedouin tribes are severely jeopardized.

September 29, 1911, Italy declares war against the Ottoman Turks in an effort to reclaim the glories of ancient Rome through new conquests in Africa.

In 1912, the Ottoman Turks make peace with Italy, leaving Libya to the Italians and the Sanusiyya. The Sanusiyya's Bedouin supporters wage guerilla warfare against the Italians for the next 30 years.

The larger insurgency effectively collapses after Sanusiyya military commander Sidi Umar al-Mukhtar, the so-called "Lion of the Desert," is hanged on September 18, 1931. Half of the Bedouins who fought the Italians lost their lives in battles or while detained in concentration camps.

In 1942, Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi is born in Sirte. His tribe, the Qadhadhfa, is relatively small. As a young man, Qadhafi is influenced by the Arab nationalist and socialist ideologies espoused by leaders such as Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser. Although excluded from the elite Cyrenaica Defense Forces on a tribal basis, Qadhafi was commissioned to serve as a regular army captain following stints at the Libyan military academy in Benghazi and the United Kingdom's Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

In 1943, the *pax Romana* concludes when British and French forces conquer Libya during the North African campaigns of World War II.

Libya is ruled by an Anglo-French military administration until the Sanusiyya's authority is reestablished when Idris Muhammad al-Sanusi is acknowledged king of the United Kingdom of Libya on December 24, 1951. Article 4 of Libya's newly adopted constitution proclaims The Kingdom of Libya is a part of the "Arab Home Land." Article 5 declares Islam is the official state religion.

The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood is founded in the mid-1950s. Its membership is comprised mostly of educated middle-class Libyans and university students in Tripoli and Benghazi. Members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood laid the groundwork for the creation of the Libyan chapter when they fled to Libya after the Egyptian government cracked down on their activities during the late-1940s. Yet the first leader of the group does not emerge until 1968.^{346 347}

Between 1960 and 1964, Tripoli's populace doubles in size due to an economic boom in Libya, which has become ranked fifth among the world's oil exporters by the mid-1960s. But the monarchy's sustained policy of rewarding its tribal allies in the east of the country at the expense of other citizens in the west yields joblessness and social tensions that foster an atmosphere which is ripe for rebellion.³⁴⁸

September 1, 1969, a military coup propels Qadhafi to the helm of power in oil-rich Libya. Qadhafi abolishes the Libyan Constitution of 1951. He establishes laws based on the political ideology of his so-called Third International Theory. As articulated in Qadhafi's infamous work titled *The Green Book*, his political philosophy is essentially an amalgam of Islamic socialism, Arab nationalism, and direct democracy. As its endorsement is critical to establishing legitimacy for his regime, initially Qadhafi panders to the Sanusiyya. To this end, he carefully placates influential citizens in the country's conservative-leaning east, appointing figures like Mansour el-Kikhia (whose relative Omar Pasha Mansour el-Khikia was the first prime minister of the eastern province of Cyrenaica) to serve as his first foreign minister. Yet once he consolidates power, Qadhafi sidelines Libya's ulema, propagating

his own idiosyncratic version of Islam after nationalizing the ulema's endowments and seizing control of mosques. Soon after assuming power Qadhafi also begins distributing funds and weapons to an array of terrorist and guerilla groups — he looks upon far-right and far-left groups with seemingly equal favor so long as they are able to stir up trouble for capitalist states the world over.

In 1970, Qadhafi makes his intentions to position Libya as a major military force clear when he dispatches his trusted lieutenant Abdel Salam Jalloud to China to position a \$75 Million offer for the purchase of a nuclear weapon.³⁴⁹

Also in 1970, an anti-Qadhafi uprising occurs in the eastern city Derna. The eastern region's conservative Muslims prove a persistent threat for the duration of Qadhafi's rule.³⁵⁰

In 1972, political parties and all opposition groups are banned in Libya under Law 71.³⁵¹

September 4, 1972, the Palestinian group named Black September takes hostage and kills members of the Israeli Olympic team during Summer Olympics hosted in Munich. Four days later, Israeli planes strike PLO bases in Syria and Lebanon, killing nearly 200. Then, on September 16, Israel destroys some 130 homes suspected of housing PLO militants. Soon thereafter, Qadhafi makes his first major donation, \$50 Million, to the PLO.^{352 353}

In 1973, Qadhafi organizes the Arab Socialist Union, which becomes Libya's sole legal political organization. The Qadhafi regime arrests hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members and activists, and forces members of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood to renounce their organization on television.^{354 355}

In March 1973, a ship carrying five tons of weapons provided to the Provisional IRA by the Qadhafi regime is intercepted by the Irish Navy. IRA leader Joe Cahill is on board.³⁵⁶

Also in 1973, Qadhafi initiates an international territorial dispute, claiming the Gulf of Sidra is part of Libyan waters.³⁵⁷

By 1974 Qadhafi is supporting neo-Fascist pro-Palestinian groups such as the PFLP, key members of which — terrorists like Carlos the Jackal — actually enjoy the Qadhafi regime's hospitality while on the run.

In 1975, following a coup attempt led by some of his closest confidants, Qadhafi reorients his regime. He looks to Libya's tribes to help him shore up his rule. He relies chiefly on his tribe, the Qadhadhfa. However, his is a small tribe, which means he must seek support from tribes like the Warfalla, which had historically protected the Qadhadhfa. Pursuant to this shift, members of the Qadhadhfa, Warfalla, and Maghraha tribes assume prominent presences within the middle and senior ranks of Libya's military and intelligence services. Writing *The Green Book* years earlier, Qadhafi asserted tribalism "damages nationalism because tribal allegiance weakens national loyalty and flourishes at its expense."³⁵⁸

By 1977 the Libyan state prohibits the existence of all organizations outside of the framework of Qadhafi's unique Jamahiriyya, which translates to "State of the Masses" or "People's Authority." Members of organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood become the targets of Qadhafi's persistent efforts to quash any and all movements which might challenge the legitimacy of his philosophies and his rule.

The U.S.S.R. invades Afghanistan in 1979. Libyans begin travelling to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. According to former LIFG Shura (Advisory) Council member and Afghan Jihad veteran Noman Bin Othman, Jalaluddin Haqqani commanded many Libyans who participated in the Arab mujahidin's anti-Communist campaigns. Perhaps ironically, Qadhafi, who views the Soviet advance into Islamic territory as a potential opportunity to leverage a leadership role in the Muslim world, encourages Libyans to participate in the Afghan Jihad.³⁵⁹

In 1980, U.S. President Ronald Reagan, who later famously calls Qadhafi the "Mad Dog of the Middle East," closes the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli.

Also in 1980, Libyan students who have studied abroad return to Libya, bringing with them the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology. They soon revive the organization, which operates clandestinely until the Qadhafi regime discovers it and jails more than 100 key members in 1998.³⁶⁰

In December 1980, the Libyan National Movement is established by opponents of the Qadhafi regime. One of them is Mansour al-Kikhia, Qadhafi's first foreign minister and ambassador to the UN. Al-Kikhia defects to the U.S.³⁶¹

In 1981, the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL) was formed in 1981 by Mohammed al-Megrief, a former Qadhafi loyalist who served as Libya's auditor general and ambassador to India.³⁶²

May 6, 1981, after evidence emerges that Qadhafi was planning to assassinate American diplomats in Paris and Rome, President Reagan expels all Libyan diplomats from the U.S. and closes Libya's diplomatic mission in Washington, D.C.³⁶³

In August 1981, the United States Sixth Fleet begins exercises in the Gulf of Sidra. Libyan fighter planes harass the American jets participating in the exercise. On August 19, two F-14 Tomcat fighters intercept two Libyan Su-22 fighter-bombers. When the American pilots attempt to escort the Libyan jets out of the exercise area one is fired on. Both Libyan planes are shot down. Their pilots eject and are rescued at sea.³⁶⁴

August 31, 1981, the Red Army Faction, a terrorist group sponsored by Libya, detonates a large car bomb in the parking lot of the U.S. Air Force's Ramstein Air Base, wounding 17 people.³⁶⁵

In 1982, U.S. President Ronald Reagan imposes sanctions on Libyan oil, citing the Qadhafi regime's links to terrorist groups.³⁶⁶

During the 1980s, jihadis who remained in Libya carry out mostly unremarkable attacks against the "apostate" Qadhafi regime. Meanwhile, their penchant for radical interpretations of Islam reflects a growing trend in the greater Arab world that is bolstered by a regional Islamic awakening referred to as "al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya." Many militants who later become key figures within the LIFG join a secretive jihadist organization formed by Awatha al-Zuwawi, a student of Islamic law who briefly participates in the Afghan Jihad. In an interview with The Jamestown Foundation in 2006, former member of the LIFG's Shura (Advisory) Council and Afghan Jihad veteran Noman Bin Othman explains, "Most of the founding leaders and cadres of the Fighting Group were members of the secretive organization formed by Zuwawi in 1982."³⁶⁷

In May of 1984, the NFSL sponsors a coup attempt, initiating an unsuccessful siege of Qadhafi's Bab az' Azia palace in Tripoli. Hundreds of its members are arrested; eight of its members are hanged.³⁶⁸

Also in 1984, Sami al-Saadi is arrested by the Qadhafi regime. He spends two weeks in prison.

April 3, 1985, during a visit to Washington, Sudanese Prime Minister Gaafar an-Numayri says he has uncovered efforts led by the Muslim Brotherhood to overthrow his regime.

April 6, 1985, Sudanese Prime Minister Gaafar an-Numayri is ousted from power in a bloodless coup.

May 14, 1985, Qadhafi slams the Muslim Brotherhood in an address to secondary school students and teachers of training colleges in Nalut, Yefrin and Jadu: "The criminal Muslim Brotherhood gang — whose headquarters is now in America, which is under the supervision of a CIA officer and whose budget is part of that of American intelligence — is attached to secret action abroad. In other words, it is part of the secret activity of American intelligence which is hostile to the anti-American peoples ...". Regarding the situation in Sudan he asserts: [The Muslim Brotherhood] ruled in Sudan. This was its finish. The first day they ruled in Sudan they imprisoned 8,000 women, they and Numayri, 8,000 women and with them about 5,000 children. They imprisoned them in animals' stables. ... Why did Numayri fall? Because Sudan, after it was governed by the Muslim Brotherhood, became unbearable, the whole people preferred to die rather than be governed by the Muslim Brotherhood. ... Two hours a day on radio he whips, cuts off hands and legs. All this because the doctors told him: Do not drink alcohol anymore, so he banned all the Sudanese, not because of his righteousness. This is the result. See the farce of the regime, reactionary in the name of Islam [words indistinct]. Twenty million Sudanese, a people of 20,000,000 disappeared. After the scandal of Sudan there is no longer an excuse for the Muslim Brotherhood to present themselves to rule any country, after their farce in Sudan, which hastened the fall of Numayri. The Muslim Brotherhood have been working secretly for years in order to govern a country. They said: When we rule, we unite Islam and raise the word of God. All right, they had the opportunity of ruling Sudan. You saw the result ... the injustice, oppression, exploitation and the unjust and oppressive laws which made one rich and one poor. ... All this in this age in which nations race in space."³⁶⁹

June 14, 1985, members of Hizballah hijack TWA Flight 847 en route from Athens to Rome. The plane is diverted to refuel in Beirut, where U.S. Navy diver Robert Dean Stethem is tortured and killed before his body thrown onto the tarmac. Thirty nine other Americans are held hostage for 16 days. Some analysts assess the Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal, whose organization receives support from Qadhafi, may have been involved.^{370 371}

December 17, 1985, the Abu Nidal Organization bombs American airline counters in Rome and Vienna, killing five Americans. U.S. officials link Libya to the bombing. The U.S. responds by sending warships to Libya's coast.^{372 373}

In March of 1986, three carrier task forces of the U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet assemble along Libya's coast.

March 24, 1986, Libya fires six SA-5 missiles acquired from the Soviet Union in late 1985 at American aircraft. The SA-5 missile batteries installed by Soviet technicians at Sirte are then put out of commission by High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missiles that targeted Libya's radar guidance signals. The following day, a second strike puts out Libya's replacement radar unit. The U.S. then destroys a Libyan missile attack craft as it approaches U.S. Navy ships protecting the aircraft carriers. Five attacks are carried out against Libyan ships.³⁷⁴

March 26, 1986, Libya suffers its most serious loss in the incursion with the Sixth Fleet when the U.S. sinks one of Qadhafi's eight Soviet-supplied Nanuchka-class missile corvettes. Fifteen years later, it is revealed in a Russian newspaper that Libya was one of the Soviet Union's biggest customers of armaments. Beginning in the 1970s, the Soviets sold Libya 2,000 tanks, 2,000 armored infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers, approximately 450 self-propelled artillery pieces, combat aircraft, and large quantities of small arms.^{375 376}

April 5, 1986, three people are killed — two American soldiers among them — and 229 more are injured — 79 American servicemen among them — when a bomb explodes at La Belle discotheque in West Berlin, a nightclub frequented by American soldiers. Intercepted messages between Tripoli and Libyan agents in East Berlin make it clear Qadhafi ordered the attack.³⁷⁷

April 15, 1986, the U.S. launches Operation El Dorado Canyon, conducting airstrikes against Libya in response to the Berlin discotheque bombing. One of Qadhafi's compounds is targeted in an ostensible effort to kill Qadhafi.

April 17, 1986, the bodies of three American University of Beirut employees — American Peter Kilburn and Britons John Douglas and Philip Padfield — were discovered near Beirut. The Arab Revolutionary Cells, a pro-Libyan group of Palestinians affiliated with terrorist Abu Nidal, claimed to have executed the three men in retaliation for Operation El Dorado Canyon.³⁷⁸

March 22, 1987, in an interview aired by NBC, Qadhafi reveals, "Libya will in fact declare that it is a Communist country and join the Warsaw Pact and deploy Soviet missiles on the coast of the Mediterranean." (Libya never joins the Warsaw Pact.)³⁷⁹

Also in 1987, a ship carrying 150 tons of arms from Libya for the IRA is seized off the coast of France. It later emerges that several other Libyan arms shipments had reached Ireland.³⁸⁰

January 28, 1988, Qadhafi attacks the Muslim Brotherhood in an address to secondary education and teacher training institutes: "If you do not understand that the Muslim Brotherhood is the donkey which America rides today in the Arab homeland, then you do not understand anything. The Muslim Brotherhood does not exist in the other Islamic countries, it only exists in the Arab countries. Why? In order to destroy pan-Arabism and [the] Arab nation. Go to the other countries, you will not find Muslim Brotherhood. In the Islamic non-Arab countries, there is no Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood is specially planted from abroad in the Arab homeland. ... You have seen the Muslim Brotherhood. We caught them in Libya. From where did they come? They came from America. Who was their leader? An American officer in the American intelligence was the leader of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood. What was their outcome? We slaughter them like sheep and goats unregrettably."³⁸¹

In 1988, Qadhafi shuts almost 50 Islamic institutes. Responding to clerics' critiques of his "innovative" interpretations of the Koran and dismissals of all post-Koranic commentary and customs, Qadhafi declares clergymen unnecessary intermediaries, asserting that Islam permits its followers to speak directly to Allah.

After spending nearly eight years in prison due to charges he was aware of a plot to assassinate Qadhafi, Ali al-Sallabi leaves

Libya in 1988. He reportedly studies in Saudi Arabia and Sudan, spending time in Yemen before moving to Qatar. Born in Benghazi, al-Sallabi is the son of an eastern Libyan banker with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁸²

Also in 1988, Sami al-Saadi leaves Libya, spending the next two years in Pakistan and Afghanistan. His wedding takes place in Algeria in 1990.³⁸³

December 21, 1988, a bomb explodes aboard PanAm Flight 103 over the town of Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 259 passengers and crew, along with 11 residents of the town of Lockerbie. Among the victims were 180 American citizens returning to the U.S. before Christmas. It is soon determined Qadhafi's intelligence agents are responsible for this attack.³⁸⁴

In June 1989, after a coup is staged against his brother-in-law Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi by Colonel Omar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir (who has remained president since), Hassan al-Turabi seizes power in Khartoum, Sudan. Turabi is a hardcore Islamist who soon sets out to mobilize terrorist groups to lead an "Islamic Revolution." By the fall of 1989 Turabi urges Usama bin Laden to transplant his entire organization to Sudan. Bin Laden agrees to assist Turabi with an ongoing war against African Christian separatists in southern Sudan. In return, Turabi allows bin Laden to use Sudan as a base for worldwide business and for preparations for his global jihad.³⁸⁵

September 19, 1989, the plane servicing French airline Union des Transports Aériens' Flight 772 from the Republic of Congo to Paris explodes over Niger, killing 171 people. Seven Americans are among the victims, including the wife of America's ambassador to Chad. It is soon determined the bombing of UTA Flight 772 was carried out by Libyan agents. After his defection in March 2011, former Libyan Foreign Minister Abdel Rahman Shalgam tells the press the attack was a failed attempt to assassinate Libyan foreign opposition leader Mohammad al-Megrief, head of the NFSL.^{386 387}

In 1990, Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah al-Muqatilah fi-Libya, known in the West as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), is formed in Afghanistan by mujahidin who fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan and wish to deliver a similar fate the "apostate" Qadhafi regime in Libya.

According to former LIFG member Noman Bin Othman, the LIFG is largely formed in camps situated near Nangarhar, Afghanistan. Intelligence sources familiar with the LIFG indicate the group's original manifesto is dated 1991. Several senior members of the LIFG fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union during the 1980s. The group's primary support base within Libya stems from Sanusiyya-affiliated communities in the eastern region. While various militant Islamist groups exist in Libya at this time, the LIFG stands out due to its efforts to bring many such groups under one banner, establishing a unified front of fighters to counter the Qadhafi regime.

The international community's isolation of Libya begins in 1991 when the United States and Britain indict two Libyans suspected of involvement in the downing of PanAm Flight 103. The same year, the French indict four Libyan suspects in the 1989 attack on UTA Flight 772 over Niger.

Several hundred Libyans who participated in the Afghan Jihad return to Libya during the early 1990s. Well trained in an array of paramilitary tactics by their brethren in South Asia, they are identified as threats to the Qadhafi regime's interests, and many are jailed upon their return. Those who are not detained begin cultivating support for anti-Qadhafi agendas among the citizens of eastern Libyan cities and towns like Benghazi and Derna, places where it has been difficult for Qadhafi to impose his anti-Islamist writ.

January 21, 1992, the UN demands Libya hand over the intelligence agents accused of participating in the Lockerbie and UTA Flight 772 bombings.³⁸⁸

March 31, 1992, the UN imposes sanctions against Libya for its unwillingness to hand over agents suspected of carrying the attack on PanAm Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. It establishes an arms embargo and imposes a selective travel ban.

April 11, 1992, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood calls the UN's sanctions against Libya "unjust and tyrannical." The banned group asserts Syria, Iran, Algeria, and Pakistan may become similar targets of the UN. "These unjust and tyrannical resolutions are a continuation of the American plan to impose its hegemony on the Arab and Islamic nations," the Muslim Brotherhood said

in a statement delivered to United Press International. Adding: “This (American) plan unveiled its ugly face during the Gulf War — Arabs and Muslims are paying the price for it now.”³⁸⁹

In early-1992, election trends indicate Algeria’s largely secular regime will soon lose power to the Islamist party called the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut or FIS). The Algerian military declares a state of emergency to block the elections of more Islamists and remove those already elected from office. The military arrests thousands of Islamist activists, who they place in concentration camps.³⁹⁰

Late in 1992, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), whose members eventually create the GSPC (now al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Magreb), is formed by Algerian jihadis. (While the GIA is not officially organized until 1992, Usama bin Laden’s son-in-law, Abdelkrim Gharzouli (aka Kari Saïd, aka Qari Said), encouraged the formation of the GIA during a meeting held by Arab Afghans in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1990.) The LIFG seizes the opportunity to align with this group that is comprised of jihadis who some LIFG members met while participating in the Afghan Jihad. The LIFG’s prerogative is to assist with the overthrow of Algeria’s secularist regime in order to create an Islamic state — a safe base from which it could launch attacks on neighboring Libya.

Beginning in 1993, the LIFG sends fighters to Algeria to support the GIA, whose role in Algeria’s nascent “Dirty War” soon overshadows that of the FIS’s militia. Accounts of the LIFG’s activities indicate the group’s fighters continue to stream into Algeria through 1995. However, this relationship does not last long, and the tension between the groups becomes so severe that LIFG members based in Britain wage what might be seen as an anti-GIA PR campaign, targeting the group’s support base across Europe.

In October 1993, led by Libya’s longtime second-in-command Abdel Salam Jalloud of the Magriha tribe, and supported by the Warfalla and al-Zintan tribes, Qadhafi’s opponents in Libya’s armed forces stage an unsuccessful coup attempt. The Libyan air force, whose membership is comprised primarily by members of Qadhafi’s tribe, crushes the insurgency.^{391 392}

November 11, 1993, the UN imposes wider travel sanctions and imposes financial sanctions against Libya.

December 10, 1993, Libyan National Movement leader Mansour al-Kikhia, who was Qadhafi’s first foreign minister and ambassador to the UN — only to resign in 1980 after Qadhafi transitions into a strongman — is kidnapped by agents of Hosni Mubarak’s government while traveling in Egypt. He is then handed over to Qadhafi. According to news reports, he is subsequently executed.^{393 394 395}

February 2, 1994, Qadhafi delivers a speech on Libyan state television in which he discusses Islamist groups, resisting sanctions, and the Lockerbie issue. Qadhafi proclaims members of “fundamentalist” groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and militant Islamist organizations are heretics. Accordingly, members of such groups embrace a corrupted version of Islam propagated by Western intelligence agencies to foster divisiveness and unrest in the Arab world. Qadhafi asserts: “Everything invented [in religion] is heresy, and every heresy is a deceit, and those who adopt deceit will rest in hell... This is a dangerous weapon; this is a dangerous strategem to destroy the Arabs and Islam, these Islamic parties. The plan was hatched in India, Afghanistan and Iran — they taught some people and recruited them and established schools — they called one Da’wah, another they called Jihad, another they called Takfir and Hijrah, another they called Tahrir [Liberation], the [Muslim] Brothers etc. They told them to enter Arab countries and cause Muslims to blaspheme and fight each other ...”³⁹⁶

On March 10, 1994, several LIFG members flee Libya to Sudan — where Usama bin Laden has established a presence — after coordinating with al-Qa’ida the assassinations of German counter-terrorism intelligence official Silvan Becker and his wife near Sirte. An Interpol warrant issued from Tripoli for the arrest of those responsible for the Becker assassination names Usama bin Laden, Faraj al-Chalabi, Faraj Mikhail Abdul Fadeel Jibril al-Alwan, and Faez Abu Zeid Muftah al-Warfali. According to German news reports, al-Chalabi, al-Awan, and al-Warfali are members of the LIFG. In 1994, former LIFG member Noman Bin Othman leaves the AfPak region for Sudan, where the LIFG, with help from UBL, had developed infrastructure for its members. An LIFG leader known as Anas al-Libi is also present in Sudan at this time. He is later identified by the U.S. as a key figure involved with al-Qa’ida’s bombings of U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on August 7, 1998 (Anas al-Libi may be the brother of Abu Laith al-Libi, another prominent LIFG member who had become a top Core al-Qa’ida figure until he was killed in a drone strike in 2008. Anas al-Libi is a computer expert whose students have included such high-ranking AQ officials as bin Laden.)^{397 398 399 400}

Also in 1994, Sami al-Saadi moves to London. He resides there for the next four years.⁴⁰¹

In 1995, there are three prominent jihadi organizations operating in Libya, including Ansar Allah, the Martyrs of Islam Movement, and the larger Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. By this time the LIFG is receiving funds and weapons brought in from Sudan, a country where Usama bin Laden enjoyed considerable support. Indeed, several LIFG members hiding in Sudan are employed by bin Laden's front company. During 1995, Belhadj becomes the group's third and final emir.⁴⁰²

From May-September 1995, violent clashes occur between Islamist militants and police in Benghazi. According to former LIFG member Noman bin Othman, the LIFG's first important operation is conducted in May of 1995 when an LIFG commander in Libya successfully recovers a member of the group from a hospital where he had been held under the supervision of armed guards. Bin Othman has described this as a "rogue" and "amateurish" operation. Discussing the matter, he revealed the LIFG was not focused on conducting small-scale sporadic attacks. Instead, the group's strategic objective was toppling the Qadhafi regime, and seizing control of entire institutions and cities was the focus of their plans. The May 1995 rescue operation yields the unintended consequence of placing the LIFG on the Qadhafi regime's radar. Reflecting on the matter, Bin Othman noted: "It destroyed everything that we had planned and developed over the years."

The first official LIFG communiqué is dated October 18, 1995. In it, the LIFG declares jihad against Qadhafi.

In October 1995, LIFG members who had been studying guerilla warfare tactics and intelligence methods while living in Khartoum are forced to leave Sudan after the Libyan government pressures the Turabi regime to extradite them to Libya. According to former LIFG member Noman bin Othman, some of them move to the United Kingdom. Bin Othman and Anas al-Libi are among them. According to testimony provided on February 22, 2011 in U.S.A v. Usama bin Laden, et al. by Moroccan al-Qa'ida operative L'Houssaine Kherchtou, bin Laden's unwillingness to protect the Libyans when confronted by Sudanese authorities yields a rift in LIFG-AQ relations. Despite bin Laden's provision of money and plane tickets, the 20 or so Libyans are angry with bin Laden for his acquiescence to the Sudanese government's demands. Kherchtou testified Anas al-Libi spent time in Qatar before eventually moving to London.

In February of 1996, the LIFG attempts to assassinate Qadhafi, killing several of his bodyguards.

In late-March 1996, Qadhafi used helicopter gunships in Benghazi, cut telephone, electricity, and water supplies to Darnah, and famously claimed that the militants "deserve to die without trial, like dogs."⁴⁰³

The LIFG is said to be involved with the bloody riots at the notorious Abu Salim prison that left 1,200 prisoners massacred on June 26, 1996. The LIFG's spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi loses two brothers during the massacre. According to Amnesty International, in 2004 Qadhafi admits the massacre did indeed occur. Also during 1996, Belhadj issues statements regarding the LIFG's views on its website. He vows to fight "all the deviant groups that call for democracy or fight for the sake of it."^{404 405 406}

On August 5, 1996, U.S. President Bill Clinton signs the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA). The Act is instated in response to Iran's stepped up nuclear program and its support of terrorist groups, namely Hizballah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Components focused on Libya seek to punish the Qadhafi regime for its sponsorship of terrorism; more specifically, the regime's unwillingness to hand over for trial two suspects in the 1988 bombing of PanAm Flight 103, both allegedly agents of Libyan intelligence.

August 31, 1996, based in London, Mohammed al-Hassan al-Rida al-Sanussi, heir to the Libyan throne with a title of crown prince, accuses the Qadhafi regime of dropping mustard and nerve gas on its opponents in Libya from planes piloted by Cubans, Serbs and North Koreans. He claims the opposition inside Libya included soldiers who had taken refuge in the Green Mountain area in the east. (Late in 1996, Scotland Yard provided the prince with special bodyguards after an attack by the regime's agents during a ceremony at a London mosque.)⁴⁰⁷

November 23, 1996, the LIFG's second attempt to assassinate Qadhafi in 1996 fails when an LIFG operative throws a grenade at Qadhafi — the grenade lands at his feet, but it does not explode.

Late in 1996, an alliance is proposed between Qadhafi's opponents in the military and Islamic militants. The alliance never seems to materialize.⁴⁰⁸

January 2, 1997, the eight military officers, including colonels and majors, who staged the 1993 coup attempt are executed.⁴⁰⁹

In April of 1997, according to a report in the group's magazine titled *al Fajr*, the LIFG storms a military post in Libya, seizing 100 machine guns for use in future operations.⁴¹⁰

On May 31, 1997, in a letter of support to the so-called Blind Sheikh published on its website the LIFG warns "the tyrant Americans about the wrath of the Muslims, who are fed up with the American oppression that wreaks havoc upon the earth."

In 1997, Ismail al-Sallabi, the 21-year-old brother of Ali al-Sallabi, is jailed after he is accused of supporting an Islamist-led plot to overthrow the Qadhafi regime. He is released with other Islamists in 2004 through the Qatari-encouraged détente between the regime and various Islamists which his brother helps broker.⁴¹¹

In October 1997, senior LIFG military commander Salah Fathi bin Salman (a.k.a. Abu Abd al-Rahman Hattab) is killed while fighting with Qadhafi's security forces.

The first Interpol arrest warrant for Usama bin Laden was issued from Libya on March 16, 1998. It charges bin Laden was involved with the 1994 assassination of German intelligence officer Sylvan Becker and his wife in Sirte. Three Libyans also listed on the warrant are believed to be members of the LIFG.⁴¹²

June 1, 1998, the LIFG conducts its last known attempt to assassinate Qadhafi near Derna. His favorite bodyguard, a member of his all-female Amazonian Guard named Aisha, is killed in the attack.

Also in 1998, the Qadhafi regime cracks down on the Muslim Brotherhood, jailing 152 Brotherhood members while forcing hundreds into exile.

By 1998, in response to Qadhafi's crackdown on their activities many prominent LIFG figures have fled to Europe and the Middle East. Others travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan, where they become prominent members of Core al-Qa'ida's leadership (examples include Abu Laith al-Libi, and Abu Yahya al-Libi, and Atiyatallah). According to his own account of his travels abroad, it would seem Sami al-Saadi moves from London to Qatar in 1998, where he spends the next two years before moving to Pakistan, and then to Afghanistan. By now, al-Sallabi is regarded as a spiritual leader by a significant segment of Libyans.⁴¹³

In April 1999, Libya agrees to allow the two men accused of being Libyan intelligence agents who were responsible for the Lockerbie bombing, Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi and Amin Khalifa Fhimah, to stand trial at a special court in the Netherlands.⁴¹⁴

The April-May 1999 edition of *Nida'ul Islam* contains an interview with LIFG spokesman Omar Rashed (Kronos assesses Omar Rashed may be an alias used by LIFG emir Belhadj). Asked about the future of the Islamic Jihad movements, the LIFG's spokesman explains, "In my view, the most dangerous development of its kind was the entry of the United States of America into a direct confrontation arena against the Islamic movements. The American missile attacks against Sudan and Afghanistan gives you an indication of the size and nature of any future confrontations. The United States no longer relies on its agents to constrict the Islamic tide; it has taken this role upon itself. For this reason, all future developments as far as we can see, will turn around that plane, with all that it involves of policies, plots and conspiracies. Here comes the role of the Islamic movement, in that it must comprehend the stance and recheck its priorities. It must also find the means, the manner, and the transactions that will guarantee for it its continuance along the path to its goal for which it was established, and this goal is the adoption of an Islamic life in a geographical location on the world map." Asked if assassinating Qadhafi will have a negative impact on the LIFG's efforts to achieve its goals in Libya, Omar Rashed notes Qadhafi's demise might initiate civil war between Libya's tribes. He adds that Qadhafi's presence in power bolsters support for the LIFG among Libyans who are contemptuous of his regime.⁴¹⁵

Also in 1999, representatives of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood initiate "intermittent" dialogue with the Qadhafi regime through Libya's UN representatives.⁴¹⁶

According to intelligence reports produced pursuant to interrogations of KSM in 2003 and 2004, it seems likely that by the late

1990s the LIFG's web of contacts included the so-called mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, who claims to have provided members of the group computer training.⁴¹⁷

May 3, 2000, the trial of the two Libyan intelligence officers charged with planting the bomb on PanAm Flight 103 started in the Netherlands.⁴¹⁸

Anas al-Libi, who has been living in Britain, evades arrest in May 2000 and likely flees to Afghanistan.

Also in 2000, Sami al-Saadi leaves Qatar for Pakistan. He then moves to Afghanistan.⁴¹⁹

January 31, 2001, Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi is found guilty of murdering the passengers who died in the Lockerbie bombing and sentenced to life in prison. Amin Khalifa Fhimah is found not guilty and released.⁴²⁰

September 11, 2001, al-Qa'ida attacks the U.S. homeland. Qadhafi is one of the first Arab leaders to condemn the attack.⁴²¹

September 25, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush signs an executive order to freeze LIFG assets in the U.S. The president asserts that the group was planning attacks on America.⁴²²

October 6, 2001, the United Nations Security Council added LIFG to its consolidated list of entities associated with al-Qa'ida.⁴²³

October 7, 2001, the U.S. invades Afghanistan. The same month, senior Bush Administration officials travel to Libya to meet with the head of Libya's External Security Organization, Musa Kusa. They are provided information about Libyans who have trained in al-Qa'ida camps, along with the names of Libyan militants living in the U.K.

In December 2001, the Bush Administration adds the LIFG to its terrorism exclusion list.

In January 2002, Libya launched a website to offer a \$1 Million antiterrorism reward for information leading to the arrests of various Islamist militants. LIFG emir Belhadj was at the top of the list.⁴²⁴

February 14, 2002, the Qadhafi Development Foundation, which was led by Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam, flies 44 Libyans who had been living in Afghanistan back to Libya.⁴²⁵

February 16, 2002, the Qadhafi regime delivers death sentences to Dr. Abd al-Qadir Izz-al-Din, controller general of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya and professor of nuclear engineering at Al-Fatih University, and Dr. Salim Abu-Hanak, deputy controller general and head of the chemistry department at Qari Yunus University in Benghazi. Additionally, the regime sentences 73 members of the Muslim Brotherhood to life in prison, sentences others to 10-year jail terms, and issues 66 acquittals. The majority of charges against this group of mostly students and academics pertain to alleged violations of Libya's Law 71, which bans political activism in opposition to the tenets of the 1969 revolution in which Qadhafi assumed power.^{426 427}

In early March 2003, during a televised Arab League Conference in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, Qadhafi criticizes Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah for hosting U.S. troops ahead of the Iraq War. On March 13, 2003 Libyan officials invite Aduraham Alamoudi, an Eritrean-born naturalized U.S. citizen, to meet with them in Libya. Alamoudi, who has ties to U.K.-based Saudi dissidents who are also al-Qa'ida-linked operatives, agrees to serve as the Qadhafi regime's fixer for a plot to hire al-Qa'ida to assassinate Crown Prince Abdullah. According to the U.S. Treasury Department, during the following months Alamoudi transfers \$1 Million to the U.K.-based the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA). In 2005, Treasury designates MIRA for providing support to al-Qa'ida, noting prosecutors in the case against al-Qa'ida members responsible for the 1998 attacks on U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania had proven MIRA was responsible for supplying UBL a satellite phone used to coordinate the attacks.⁴²⁸

429 430 431 432

In March 2003, Musa Kusa reengages U.S. and British intelligence authorities regarding Libya's WMD programs.⁴³³

The LIFG's hand is detected in the May 2003 bombings in Casablanca, Morocco, which was carried out in coordination with the Moroccan Islamic Fighting Group. The attacks kill more than 40 people, injuring more than 100. Core al-Qa'ida military committee leader Saif al-Adl, who is thought to have been hiding in Iran at the time, is also believed to have coordinated this attack.

August 13, 2003, Libya agrees to admit responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing and authorizes a settlement of \$2.7 Billion — \$10 Million paid to each victim's family — in return for sanctions against the country being lifted.⁴³⁴

August 18, 2003, a prominent Arabic-language newspaper reports on the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood's protest of the Qadhafi regime's agreement to pay the \$2.7 Billion settlement in the Lockerbie bombing case: "At a time when the Libyan people are hoping to emerge from the state of internal frustration through a real reform program that tackles their political, economic, and social problems and in view of the Libyan ruling regime's failure to bring about this change, we were taken aback by this regime's agreement to admit full responsibility for the Lockerbie incident and by its pledge to pay exorbitant compensations that are burdensome for the Libyan people's treasury. ... Thus it will continue to pay the successive bills in this crisis after the Libyan people had paid the previous bills through their suffering from the blockade that lasted seven years." Their lengthy statement adds that the admission of guilt and decision to issue such payment will have "grave consequences and will be tantamount to a check mortgaging Libya and its resources."⁴³⁵

In October 2003, the German-owned freighter BBC China is intercepted while carrying uranium enrichment gas-centrifuge components bound for Libya for use in Qadhafi's secret nuclear weapons program.⁴³⁶

December 9, 2003, the UN lifts certain sanctions imposed on Libya due to its roles in the Lockerbie and UTA Flight 772 bombings.

December 19, 2003, Qadhafi announces he is dismantling his WMD and ballistic missiles programs. It is later determined Qadhafi is the A.Q. Kahn network's most ambitious customer, ordering a gas-centrifuge plant sufficient to produce enough highly enriched uranium to turn out roughly 10 nuclear weapons annually. Cables leaked by Wikileaks reveal the regime's 11.4 pounds of highly enriched uranium is not removed from Tripoli until December 21, 2009.^{437 438}

Also in 2003, the LIFG's deputy emir, Khalid al-Sharif (aka Abu Hazim al-Libi, aka Abu Hazim, aka Abu Hazem, aka Muhammad Dawood, aka Dawood, aka Ayyub al-Libi, aka Abd al-Wahid), is arrested in Peshawar, Pakistan. He is handed over to the U.S., which later transfers him to Libya.⁴³⁹

In early March of 2004, a U.S. Congressional delegation arrives in Libya.

On March 3, 2004, U.S. Senator Joe Biden addresses Qadhafi's handpicked General People's Congress. The ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Biden had reportedly arrived in Libya to argue the case for democratization, but his aides discouraged the plan due to concerns over how such remarks might be received. After he leaves the stage, a speaker lauds Libya's rejection of "democracy of the Zionist lobby" and "subordination." Following an hour-long meeting with Senator Biden, Qadhafi remarks to the press that, "Terror or terrorism is the enemy of all of us, not the enemy of America." He adds, "When we fight terrorism, we do that for ourselves."^{440 441}

March 6, 2004, The Washington Post reports that when asked about Islamist opposition groups, Qadhafi dismisses the role of Islam in politics: "We don't want to involve God in questions of infrastructure and sewerage, technology and water. Islam equals God. How can we involve it in such daily affairs?" Asked whether The Green Book is out of date, Qadhafi responds, "I consider it the guide for all humanity. One day, the whole world will be a republic of the masses, topple down all governments and parliaments."⁴⁴²

In early March of 2004, Belhadj is turned away by authorities while trying to board a flight to London via Beijing using a French passport. He is then detained by US and Thai authorities in Bangkok. He was reportedly interrogated by the CIA, and then transferred to Libya on March 9, 2004. LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi is detained in Hong Kong by the CIA; he is also sent to Tripoli. News reports later suggest MI6 provided the tips which led to the capture of both of these LIFG leaders.^{443 444 445 446}

March 11, 2004, 191 people are killed and another 1,800 are wounded in the Madrid terror attacks. The LIFG is allegedly involved in the attack.⁴⁴⁷

April 23, 2004, U.S. President George W. Bush certifies that Libya has fulfilled the requirements of all U.N. resolutions issued in response to the 1988 downing of PanAm Flight 103, terminating the tenets of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 which pertain to Libya.⁴⁴⁸

Late in May 2004, LIFG member Abu Hafis al-Libi (who lived in Ireland from 1996 through April 2004) is killed in Iraq during the first assault on Fallujah. He had arrived in the country earlier in the year and become a lieutenant of al-Qa'ida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Al-Libi had sent word back to his associates in Ireland via contacts in London that he had participated in the beheading of an "infidel" in May (American construction worker Nicholas Berg was beheaded by Zarqawi's group the same month). Al-Libi, who had spent time in Afghanistan during the early 1990s, traveled between Yemen and Sudan before settling in Ireland in 1996.⁴⁴⁹

December 8, 2004, the U.S. State Department designates the LIFG a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

In April 2005, the LIFG's deputy emir, Khalid al-Sharif, is transferred from U.S. custody to Libya.⁴⁵⁰

June 25-26, 2005, Libyan opposition groups host an anti-Qadhafi regime conference in London. The groups who participate call for the recognition of a Libyan government in exile, they demand Qadhafi step down, and call for the UN's support of their efforts to reinstate the Libya's constitution of 1951.

National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), which frequently produces reports on incidents or clashes in Libya between opposition forces and the regime's police or military, along with reports on attacks or assassinations abroad by the regime's intelligence agents against opposition figures, is perhaps the most organized of these groups. Other groups include the Libyan National Movement, the National Alliance, the Islamist Rally, the Republican Rally for Democracy and Justice, the Libyan Movement for Change and Reform, and the Libyan National Democratic Organization. NFSL leader Ibrahim Sahd chaired the meetings; Libyan Crown Prince Mohammed al-Hassan al-Rida al-Sanussi participates in the conference. On June 26, The Associated Press quoted Abdel Hafedh bin Sraiti of the Libyan National Movement as saying: "The [Libyan] regime suggests that the only alternative to Qadhafi would be the Islamic extremists. We are here to tell the world that there are many alternatives to Qadhafi, and none of them are extremists because we believe in democracy and we reject fanaticism." The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood elects not to participate in the conference.^{451 452 453}

July 10, 2005, LIFG member Abu Yahya al-Libi escapes from the prison at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. He was captured in Pakistan in 2002. Al-Libi quickly ascends to a senior role in Core al-Qa'ida.⁴⁵⁴

August 3, 2005, Libyan Muslim Brotherhood Controller General Sulayman Abd al-Qadir participates in an interview broadcast by the Qatar-based Al Jazeera news organization. The interviewer provides the following biographical sketch for Sulayman Abd al-Qadir: "He was born in Benghazi in 1966. He graduated from the Chemical Engineering Department in Al-Burayqah University and worked as engineer in Libyan, Swiss and German firms. He was also lecturer at the Institute of Electrical Sciences. He is one of scores of Libyans who managed to flee the country before the discovery of the organization. He was elected controller-general of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2004. He speaks German and English and is a writer and a poet with several of his works published in Arabic newspapers and magazines." Asked why the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya has chosen to finally come out in the open, al-Qadir explains, "it is because we have a peaceful programme based on dialogue." Asked if coming out into the open endangers both those in prison and those operating clandestinely in Libya, al-Qadir says: "What we have now are the brothers in prison. We don't have any brothers outside prison."⁴⁵⁵

By August 2005 Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam is initiating discussions about developing a "rehabilitation" dialogue focused on reconciling relations between the regime and Islamist groups. In a television interview on August 20, he tells Al Jazeera that jailed Islamists — notably members of the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadist groups — will be released and reinstated in their previous jobs. The same month, the Qadhafi regime announced 787 dissidents who were living in exile had accepted invitations to return to Libya. Asked by Al Jazeera how many political prisoners are still held by the Qadhafi regime, Saif al-Islam replies: "I don't have the number with me as well but the number that will be released in the coming few days is 131, which includes members of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as members of other groups that have adopted violent means such as The Libyan [Islamic] Fighting Group and the Repudiation and Renunciation groups [Arabic: Al-Takfir Wa al-Hijrah]. Those individuals have changed their thought and convictions. There is an overall conviction that they will integrate in the society and abandon violence."^{456 457}

During the fall of 2005, while discussing his interest in implementing substantial reforms in Libya during an exhibition of his artwork in Japan, Saif al-Islam, the presumed heir to the helm of power in Tripoli, ponders, "Why should we have an army? If Egypt invades Libya, the Americans are going to stop it." He asserts that during the Reagan era Libya was "expecting America to attack us anytime — our whole defensive strategy was how to deal with the Americans. We used terrorism and violence

because these are the weapons of the weak against the strong. I don't have missiles to hit your cities, so I send someone to attack your interests. Now that we have peace with America, there is no need for terrorism, no need for nuclear bombs." (In March 2009, Libya pays Russia \$200 Million to build three Molniya class missile boats; in July 2010, Libya pays Russia 1.3 Billion Euros to upgrade 200 of Qadhafi's Soviet-era tanks.) Juxtaposing the types of terrorism employed by his father and those of al-Qa'ida, he notes, "We used terrorism as tactics, for bargaining," adding: "Mr. bin Laden uses it for strategy. We wanted to gain more leverage. He wants to kill people. Fundamentalism in Libya — it's always there, though not so strong as before, in the nineteen-nineties." He then notes al-Qa'ida in Iraq's leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is recruiting Libyans.^{458 459}

In a September 2005 interview, then-Foreign Minister Abd al Rahman Shalgam characterized some of the regime's expatriate opponents as individuals who fled the country after committing economic crimes or collaborating with foreign intelligence services. He then invited any expatriate dissidents who had not committed crimes to return to Libya.⁴⁶⁰

September 3, 2005, a Libyan newspaper reports the Qadhafi regime has released 1,675 prisoners to mark the 36th anniversary of the September 1 Libyan revolution. Led by Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam, the Qadhafi Development Foundation calls for the release of all Islamic prisoners, except the nearly 500 who are charged with belonging to eight groups which advocate violence.⁴⁶¹

In October 2005, the British government designates the LIFG a terrorist organization. British authorities then promptly arrests five known LIFG-affiliated exiles living in the U.K. They are soon returned to Libya.⁴⁶²

Also in October 2005, the Qadhafi regime announces a retrial for Muslim Brotherhood activists.

January 3, 2006, The Associated Press reports nearly 130 political prisoners, mainly members of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, have started a hunger strike. The report notes Saif al-Islam had promised their release by September 2005.⁴⁶³

February 8, 2006, the U.S. Treasury Department designates five individuals and four entities based in the U.K. for their roles financing the LIFG. The Sanibal Relief Agency is among them.⁴⁶⁴

February 17, 2006, protestors attack the Italian consulate in Benghazi after an Italian Cabinet minister wears a T-shirt featuring recently published Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. Eleven people are killed by Libyan security forces. Five years later, this date is declared a day of rage by rioters in Benghazi who initiate the Libya's 2011 revolution.^{465 466}

In March 2006, the Qadhafi regime releases the remaining 84 members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Of those released, 55 are flown to Benghazi. Remarking on the release in Cairo, the Global Muslim Brotherhood movement's leader, Mohammad Mahdi Akef, describes this as a reflection of a "a new chapter in the record of reform and support of freedoms in Libya."⁴⁶⁷

In April 2006, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi is reportedly handed over to Libya.⁴⁶⁸

May 15, 2006, the U.S. State Department announces it intends to remove Libya from its list of states sponsoring terrorism. Forty five days after State notifies Congress, Libya is removed from the list.

May 24, 2006 reveals Swiss authorities arrested eight men suspected of belonging to an LIFG cell in Zurich and Basel on May 12 and May 15. They were allegedly plotting to use RPGs to attack American or Israeli aircraft in Zurich or Geneva, and one cell member reportedly mentioned a plan to launch an attack during the World Cup Soccer Championship games hosted in Germany during the following two months. One of the two key suspects was Badr al-Juwadi, who had been in contact with a suspected member of al-Qa'ida's Hamburg cell. Authorities claimed Al-Juwadi had advised a friend in Germany to leave the country while the World Cup events were taking place.

May 31, 2006, the U.S. and Libya sign and exchange documents establishing embassies in their respective capitals.

On the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Ayman al-Zawahiri announced the merger of Algeria's GSPC with al-Qa'ida, creating what has become known as al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).⁴⁶⁹

In November 2006, working through the Qadhafi Development Foundation Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam began preliminary

discussions with imprisoned senior LIFG figures. LIFG emir Belhadj and the group's spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi represented the LIFG in the discussions that would transform into negotiations focused on arriving at some form of reconciliation between the LIFG and the regime. The effort reflected a component of Saif al-Islam's larger plan titled "The Plan for Tomorrow's Libya" that called for the neutralization of political opposition centers within Libya. Outside experts, including Noman Bin Othman and Qatar-based Egyptian cleric and Muslim Brotherhood figure Yusuf al-Qaradawi, participate as counselors, and Benghazi-born cleric Sheikh Ali al-Sallabi serves as a mediator. Although prominent Qadhafi regime officials are involved, the regime takes care to emphasize the project is spearheaded by the Qadhafi Development Foundation. Some analysts view Saif al-Islam's proposed dialogue as an attempt to stabilize the regime's relations with Islamists that is motivated by his own interests in reducing opposition to his eventual assumption of a leadership role in Libya as his father's successor.⁴⁷⁰

December 30-31, 2006, nearly 60 LIFG members are released from prison. News reports indicate some were charged with supporting armed groups in Iraq. Noman Bin Othman, who took part in the dialogue between the two sides explains, "Things are progressing but we are still at the beginning of the road." LIFG Emir Belhadj and Sharia official Sami al-Saadi represent the LIFG in the negotiations, while military intelligence chief Abdullah al-Sanusi, foreign intelligence chief Musa Kusa (a relative through marriage of LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi), and Libya's top internal security official Al-Tuhami Khalid represent the government.⁴⁷¹

August 22, 2007, Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam delivers a speech on Libya's state television network. He calls for the development of a new constitution. Although asserting his father's rule should not be challenged, he argues against turning Libya into a dynasty or monarchy. "The next challenge for Libya is to draft a package of laws, which you can call a constitution or whatever you like, but they must be endorsed by the people to become a contract between all Libyans," the younger Gadhafi said.⁴⁷²

In October 2007, Coalition forces in Iraq conduct a raid near Sinjar, which is located along Iraq's border with Syria. They collect records for approximately 700 foreign fighters who entered Iraq between August 2006 and August 2007. According to the 595 records which include country of origin information, Saudi Arabia is the leading source of foreign fighters (244), with Libya ranking second (112). Among the countries of origin reflected in the "Sinjar Records," on a per capita basis Libya was contributing far more fighters than any other country. The eastern Libya city Derna (population of approximately 80,000) contributes the greatest number of these fighters, with Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (population of 4.3 million) ranking second; Mecca, Benghazi, and Casablanca rank third, fourth, and fifth, respectively. Of the Libyans, some 60 percent are from Derna; 24 percent are from Benghazi.

On November 3, 2007, Core al-Qa'ida leadership figures Ayman al-Zawahiri and LIFG member turned Core al-Qa'ida member Abu Laith al-Libi announce the merger of LIFG members under al-Libi's command with al-Qa'ida. The media quickly portrays this as a merger of the LIFG with al-Qa'ida. Yet this so-called merger seems rather improbable as certain LIFG leaders argue al-Libi, who opposed the LIFG's negotiations with the Qadhafi regime, did not have authority to formalize such a merger. Months later, Ayman al-Zawahiri clarified the meaning of his statement, explaining: "I did not say that Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Muqatilah has joined Al-Qa'ida ... However, I said that a group of the notables of the Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Muqatilah has joined the Qa'idat al-Jihad Group. By this, I meant to please Muslims and break the hearts of the enemies of Islam."⁴⁷³

January 15, 2008, a U.S. federal judge orders the Libyan government to pay \$6 Billion to the families of the seven Americans killed in the 1989 bombing of UTA Flight 772.⁴⁷⁴

January 28, 2008, former LIFG member and high-ranking Core AQ official Abu Laith al-Libi is killed in a drone strike in Pakistan's North Waziristan region.⁴⁷⁵

In March 2008, a handwritten letter by LIFG emir Belhadj affirms the LIFG is developing revisions and participating in dialogue with Libyan authorities led by Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam.⁴⁷⁶

March 29, 2008, a Libyan opposition conference is hosted in London by anti-Qadhafi groups who reiterate their demands as articulated during a 2005 conference. The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood is among them.⁴⁷⁷

In April 2008, 91 LIFG members are released from prison.

In June 2008, 40 more LIFG members are released from prison.

August 27, 2008, Libyan Muslim Brotherhood Leader Sulayman Abd al-Qadir expresses dissatisfaction with Saif al-Islam's efforts to achieve "reconciliation" between his father's regime and Islamist groups. Regarding his organization's history, al-Qadir explains, "We are a Libyan Islamic movement that rose in our country over 50 years ago in explicit terms and with the involvement of well-known persons and leaders. It has always been primarily concerned with Libyan national affairs. The most important point for us is that the foundation of our ideology is Islam, which forms our people's identity and cultural framework of reference." Asked how he feels about the Qadhafi regime's rapprochement with the U.S., referring to the regime's \$2.7 Billion settlement with families of the victims of the Lockerbie bombing al-Qadir replies, "With regard to ties with the United States, I believe these ties are still contingent on the term 'compensation,' which has exhausted the Libyan people's treasury both directly and indirectly."⁴⁷⁸

October 30, 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department designates three additional U.K.-based individuals for their roles raising funds for the LIFG. According to the Treasury Department's press release regarding the designations, the U.K. is the greatest source of funding for the LIFG.⁴⁷⁹

November 15, 2008, asked whether it would have been better for the Qadhafi regime to have made it a higher priority to achieve reconciliation with oppositionist movements inside Libya than rapprochement with the West, Libyan Muslim Brotherhood Leader Sulayman Abd al-Qadir remarks: "We believe that the interest of our country lies in the return of political accord and harmony to it and the partnership of all its sons without exception in its service and progress. Its loss and setback lies in despotism, autocracy and exclusion of diversity and different opinions. The situation of our country is the best evidence of this. We look forward to a real national reconciliation that includes the entire Libyan political spectrum. But it is very regrettable that the steps being taken so far do not emanate from a real will for reform." Regarding Saif al-Islam's efforts to cultivate goodwill among Islamist groups through his work with the Qadhafi Development Foundation, speaking in Zurich al-Qadir asserts: "this remedy strengthens the foundations of hegemony. All the activities that took place, including new newspapers or forums or associations, sprang from one organization [referring to the Qadhafi Development Foundation]. Therefore, despite our appreciation of the steps they took, this is a continuation of the policy of exclusion and marginalization. We think that serious steps must seriously aim at issuing a national constitution that expresses the real will of the Libyan people, strengthens the rule of law and independence of the judiciary, organizes the work of the security agencies to protect the country and respect the citizen, provides room for establishing and activating real institutions of civil society, and promotes a genuine and active role for the press and constructive national media, which serve public awareness and contribute towards exercising active national control."⁴⁸⁰

March 9, 2009, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reports members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya are displeased with the Qadhafi regime's efforts to placate Islamists by reshuffling roles played in government by key officials. One of the Islamists' chief qualms is the regime's unwillingness to put on trial officials who were responsible for the massacre of 1,200 prisoners held in Abu Salim prison in 1996, coupled with the regime's unwillingness to provide death certificates to the families of those who were killed. Islamists also demand compensation for the families of the activists killed at Abu Salim.⁴⁸¹

April 27, 2009, Human Rights Watch personnel visit with Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi at Abu Salim prison.⁴⁸²

May 10, 2009, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi dies while imprisoned by the Qadhafi regime.⁴⁸³

June 2009, LIFG Shura Council member turned al-Qa'ida legal authority Abu Yahya al-Libi calls on Muslims in Libya and throughout the Maghreb to "sincerely side with their mujahidin brothers in Algeria" and fight against the "infidel" governments.⁴⁸⁴

On July 2, 2009, Camille Tawil reported bin Othman learned the group's revisions were nearly complete. Bin Othman advised the LIFG leaders involved in this effort stressed that the "lawful research" examines "the armed action phenomenon at the international level, not only in Libya." He said they "want to play a role in stopping the shedding of the blood of Muslims and innocent people everywhere." Bin Othman added that "the line of excess and extremism in religion, those qualified to issue fatwas, the rules of takfir (labeling other Muslims as infidels) and of the lawful confiscation of money, as well as other issues of this kind. What is clear is that the research will deal with the practices of the Al-Qa'ida organization, and it will present evidence that they are not religiously permitted."⁴⁸⁵

August 2, 2009, Libyan cleric Sheikh Ali al-Sallabi, who has served as a mediator between the Qadhafi regime and jailed LIFG leaders, reports the LIFG has completed a nine-chapter, 421-page book which contains revisions to the group's doctrines. According to al-Sallabi, "We are waiting at present for the opinions of scholars like Shaykh Salman al-Awdah, Dr Yusuf

al-Qaradawi, Shaykh Ahmed Raysouni from Morocco, and Hamzah Abu-Faris and Sulayman al-Bayrah from Libya and their assessment of these revisions from the shari'ah angle before approving and printing it."⁴⁸⁶

August 16, 2009, the LIFG's spokesperson in Britain refutes claims the group has merged with al-Qa'ida.⁴⁸⁷

August 20, 2009, Scottish Secretary for Justice Kenny MacAskill announces Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, who is suffering from "terminal" prostate cancer and has served 8.5 years of his life sentence, will be released from prison on compassionate grounds and returned to Libya. Qadhafi provides al-Megrahi a hero's reception.⁴⁸⁸

Under ostensible coercion while imprisoned by the Qadhafi regime in Libya's notorious Abu Salim prison, late in August 2009 the LIFG issues a 400-plus-page recantation of their previous jihadi doctrine, particularly the group's focus on overthrowing the Qadhafi regime. Titled "Corrective Studies in Understanding Jihad, Enforcement of Morality, and Judgment of People," the book is coauthored by six LIFG leaders, including Belhadj and al-Saadi.

September 2, 2009, the LIFG apologizes to Qadhafi for attempting to overthrow his regime.⁴⁸⁹

September 17, 2009, a Libyan newspaper reports the LIFG's imprisoned leaders had presented the Qadhafi regime the LIFG's "revisions."⁴⁹⁰

On March 23, 2010, the Qadhafi regime released 10 LIFG leaders, including LIFG emir Belhadj, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi, and LIFG military commander Khalid Sharif.⁴⁹¹ They were freed alongside more than 200 "rehabilitated" jihadis held at Abu Salim Prison.⁴⁹² During the press conference that coincided with this prisoner release, Saif al-Islam lauded the LIFG's revisions, claiming members of the group "were no longer a danger to society."⁴⁹³

April 16, 2010, Libyan cleric Sheikh Ali al-Sallabi discusses his work as a mediator in the dialogue between the Qadhafi regime and jailed members of Islamist groups like the LIFG. He notes three of the LIFG leaders who authored the group's "revisions" are still in jail alongside another 400 Islamists.⁴⁹⁴

Thirty seven more Islamists and jihadis are released from prison on August 31, 2010. LIFG emir Belhadj reports only five of them were affiliated with the LIFG. One of them is Abu Sufian Ibrahim Ahmed Hamuda bin Qumu. An al-Qa'ida member who was previously held at Guantanamo Bay, the Qadhafi regime reports bin Qumu had at one time served as Usama bin Laden's driver, which bin Qumu has denied.^{495 496}

February 15, 2011, anti-Qadhafi protests erupt in Benghazi in response to the arrest of human rights activist Fethi Tarbel. Attempting to quell the hostilities the regime releases more Islamists, including LIFG member Abd al-Wahab al-Qayid.⁴⁹⁷

February 16, 2011, Islamist gunmen storm a military arms depot in Derna, seizing weapons, dozens of vehicles and hostages who they threatened to execute if the military did not halt its assault on nearby al-Baida. Joined by Army Colonel Adnan al-Nwisri, the group named itself the Islamic Emirate of Barqa. A Libyan official claims members of al-Qa'ida were among the group's ranks.⁴⁹⁸

Protesters designate February 17 a "day of rage." It is the anniversary of the 2006 clashes in Benghazi in which Qadhafi's security forces killed protestors who were attacking the consulate of former colonial power Italy. The uprising quickly evolves into a civil war.

Justice Minister Mustafa Abdel Jalil, who had been leading negotiations for the release of hostages taken by members of the Islamic Emirate of Barqa, becomes one of the first major defectors from the Qadhafi regime on February 21. He cites the "excessive use of violence against government protesters" as the basis for his decision.⁴⁹⁹

Soon after the uprisings begin in Benghazi, former LIFG members create a new organization called the Islamic Movement for Change.⁵⁰⁰

February 21, 2011, in an appearance on Al Jazeera TV Qatar-based Egyptian cleric and Global Muslim Brotherhood thought leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi issues a fatwa calling on Libyans to kill Qadhafi.⁵⁰¹

February 22, 2011, Qadhafi's interior minister, Abd-al-Fattah Yunus, defects and joins the rebels' as their military chief. Qadhafi delivers a televised speech amid violent social unrest against his autocratic rule. In the speech, he vows to hunt down protesters "inch by inch, room by room, home by home, alleyway by alleyway."^{502 503}

February 23, 2011, the Qadhafi regime alleges al-Qa'ida is attempting to establish an Islamic emirate in the eastern Libyan city Derna, a city of approximately 80,000 which provided the majority of the Libyans who appeared in the Sinjar Records.

February 24, 2011, rebel militias seize control of Misrata after evicting forces loyal to Qadhafi.⁵⁰⁴

Agence France-Presse reported a Qadhafi regime official claimed al-Qa'ida had "established an emirate in Derna led by Abd al-Hakim Khalil al-Hasadi, a former Guantanamo detainee." The official claimed al-Hasadi's lieutenant in nearby al-Baida, Kheirallah Baraassi, was also a member of al-Qa'ida. Al-Hasadi refuted the claim he had established an emirate in Derna in a statement broadcast by Al Jazeera television the following day.^{505 506}

February 24, 2011, an al-Qa'ida ideologue known as Atiyatallah released a message focused on events in North Africa. Atiyatallah was an alias used by Libyan al-Qa'ida member Jamal Ibrahim Ashtawi al Misrati (aka Atiyah Abd al-Rahman), who, after reportedly becoming the terror network's deputy commander, was killed in a drone strike in Pakistan in August 2011. In the message titled "The Revolution of the Peoples and the Fall of the Corrupt Arab Regime," Atiyatallah asserted, "our Arab and Islamic peoples in Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Jordan, Yemen, and elsewhere are nowadays in need for someone to remind them of God and His laws. They are in need for someone who could gently help them gain wisdom from these global lessons. This would be an important role for the preachers, the knowledge-seekers, and the Islamic movements. ... The Egyptian regime fell and before it the Tunisian regimes, perhaps the Yemeni, the Jordanian, the Libyan, the Algerian, and the Moroccan regimes will suffer the same fate, God willing."^{507 508}

February 26, 2011, the UN Security Council imposes sanctions on Qadhafi and his family, referring the regime's crackdown on the rebels to the International Criminal Court.

February 28, 2011, EU governments approve sanctions against Qadhafi and his closest associates, including an arms embargo and bans on travel to Libya.

Also on February 28, 2011, a statement attributed to the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood calls for a non-tribal government to "be formed by those who actually led the revolution on the ground" and to exclude supporters of the original Qadhafi coup or officials involved in human rights violations.

On March 5, 2011, the Transitional National Council (TNC) meets in Benghazi and declares itself the sole representative of Libya.⁵⁰⁹

March 8, 2011, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reports negotiations between Islamists and the Qadhafi regime break down due to the establishment of the TNC.⁵¹⁰

March 10, 2011, France recognizes the TNC as the legitimate representative body for the Libyan people. In an interview with a Spanish newspaper, TNC Chairman Jalil states: "As soon as the regime falls, we will have six or seven months to call elections. Until then, we will respect all international agreements. After the elections, everything will be left in the hands of the new leaders. We will leave. None of the current members of the Council will run in the elections. Libya is in need of new faces and there will be no room for officials from the old regime. Our basic text is the 1951 Constitution to which we are of course introducing changes."^{511 512}

March 11, 2011, Libyan Islamic scholar Sheikh Ali al-Sallabi urges world powers to recognize the TNC as the legitimate government of Libya, impose a no-fly zone, and arm the rebels. "The Libyan people went onto the streets in peaceful and civilized demonstrations to ask Gadhafi the dictator to step down after 42 years in power. These 42 years were black and dark years for the Libyan people," al-Sallabi tells Reuters. He says Islamist scholars and groups support the TNC, which is based in Benghazi and led by ex-Justice Minister Mustafa Abdel Jalil. According to Reuters, Ali al-Sallabi sought to "allay Western concerns about the Islamist groups in a post-Gaddafi era, saying Libyan Islamists did not believe in al Qaeda's ideology and did not want to establish an Islamic state." He remarked, "All these accusations by the Libyan regime that these young men are linked to

al Qaeda are lies. I was supervising the dialogue with these young men. They want a modern civic state with an independent judiciary, the rule of law and government of institutions with a new constitution agreed on by all Libyans." Al-Sallabi's brother Ismail is the leader of the rebels' February 17 Martyrs' Brigade in Benghazi.^{513 514 515}

March 12, 2011, meeting in Cairo the Arab League calls on the UN Security Council to issue a no-fly zone over Libya and announces it is recognizing the rebel movement as the country's legitimate government. Earlier in the month, it suspended the membership of representatives of the Qadhafi regime.⁵¹⁶

March 16, 2011, the Qadhafi regime's forces approach Benghazi. Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam tells France-based television channel Euronews: "Everything will be over in 48 hours."⁵¹⁷

March 17, 2011, the UN Security Council votes to impose a no-fly zone over Libya, authorizing "all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians from the Qadhafi regime.⁵¹⁸

March 19, 2011, the first airstrikes halt the advance of Qadhafi's forces against Benghazi and target Libya's air defense systems.⁵¹⁹

March 25, 2011, a Libyan rebel commander admits his fighters have links to al-Qa'ida.⁵²⁰

March 28, 2011, Qatar becomes the first Arab state to recognize the rebels as the legitimate representatives of Libya. In a national address, U.S. President Barack Obama remarks: "Of course, there is no question that Libya — and the world — will be better off with Qadhafi out of power. I, along with many other world leaders, have embraced that goal, and will actively pursue it through non-military means. But broadening our military mission to include regime change would be a mistake. ... As the bulk of our military effort ratchets down, what we can do — and will do — is support the aspirations of the Libyan people."⁵²¹

March 29, 2011, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Admiral James Stavridis advises the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee that NATO has detected only "flickers" of al-Qa'ida and Hizballah. During a conference held in London by 40 governments and organizations participants agree to establish a Contact Group comprising 20 countries to coordinate efforts in a post-Qadhafi Libya.^{522 523}

Also on March 29, 2011, the TNC releases an eight-point plan for the post-Qadhafi era titled "A Vision of a Democratic Libya." Section 7 is titled "Political democracy and the values of social justice." Part D of this section states the TNC intends to create: "A constitutional civil state which respects the sanctity of religious doctrine and condemns intolerance, extremism and violence that are manufactured by certain political, social or economic interests. The state to which we aspire will denounce violence, terrorism, intolerance and cultural isolation; while respecting human rights, rules and principles of citizenship and the rights of minorities and those most vulnerable. Every individual will enjoy the full rights of citizenship, regardless of color, gender, ethnicity or social status."⁵²⁴

On March 30, 2011, Libyan Foreign Minister Musa Kusa defects and flies to Britain.⁵²⁵

April 2, 2011, The Wall Street Journal reports former GTMO detainee bin Qumu is training rebel fighters under the command of al al-Hasadi's militia in Derna. Salah al-Barrani, identified as a former LIFG fighter, is identified as al-Hasadi's field commander. The Journal quotes al-Hasadi as noting "Our view is starting to change of the U.S. ... If we hated the Americans 100%, today it is less than 50%. They have started to redeem themselves for their past mistakes by helping us to preserve the blood of our children."⁵²⁶

April 10, 2011, after leading a delegation of four African leaders who participate in talks held in Tripoli, South African President Jacob Zuma announces Qadhafi has accepted a roadmap for ending the conflict.⁵²⁷

April 11, 2011, the rebels reject the roadmap South Africa President Zuma and three other African heads of state negotiated with Qadhafi.⁵²⁸

April 13, 2011, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem acknowledges Qatar is supplying arms to Libyan rebels, and says UN resolutions permit the supply of "defensive weapons."⁵²⁹

April 15, 2011, Ayman al-Zawahiri called for the mujahidin of North Africa to support the revolution underway in Libya, mentioning the LIFG in his review of the injustices the Libyan people had suffered at the hands of Qadhafi and the Americans. Al-Zawahiri, who, according to Noman bin Othman, managed al-Qa'ida's Libya portfolio and required al-Qa'ida's North African franchise to seek his input on all matters pertaining to Libya, called for a regional insurgency against Western forces should they take part in the Libyan revolution.⁵³⁰

April 16, 2011, it is reported that AQIM spokesman Salah Abu-Muhammad claimed al-Qa'ida had established emirates in several Libyan cities, including Derna and Benghazi. In an interview with Camille Tawil, he noted, "We take pride in particular in the Derna Emirate and its honorable Emir Shaykh Abd-al-Hakim, who together with his brethren have formed the Islamic Council of the city to rule according to God's Sharia."⁵³¹

April 16, 2011, a prominent LIFG member named Urwah is killed by the Qadhafi regime's security forces in an ambush on April 16 near Ajdabiya.⁵³²

April 19, 2011, an AQIM media official advised the message from April 16 was a fabrication that was likely produced by Algerian intelligence.⁵³³

April 30, 2011, NATO launches a missile strike on a house in Tripoli, killing Qadhafi's youngest son and three grandchildren.⁵³⁴

May 3, 2011 the London-based Saudi daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reported Colonel Muhammad Bani, the military spokesman for the Libyan rebels, stated the TNC was extremely happy about the news of bin Laden's death. Col Bani noted, "We want the Americans to do the same with Al-Qadhafi." He said the Libyan opposition was aware bin Laden fought against it, and had evidence al-Qa'ida sympathizers were actively fighting the rebels. He described bin Laden as an enemy of the Libyan opposition.⁵³⁵

May 30, 2011, during his first televised appearance in a month, Qadhafi renews calls with a ceasefire in talks with visiting South Africa President Zuma. He offers no sign of when he might heed demands to step down.⁵³⁶

June 1, 2011, Libya's top oil official, Shokri Ghanem, appears in Rome and announces his defection.

June 8, 2011, Western and Arab states meet with rebels in Abu Dhabi to discuss what U.S. officials dub the "end game" for Qadhafi.⁵³⁷

On June 27, the International Criminal Court issues arrest warrants for Qadhafi, his son Saif al-Islam, and Qadhafi's intelligence chief Abdullah al-Sanusi, charging them with crimes against humanity.⁵³⁸

In mid-July 2011, The New York Times interviewed a "senior commander" of the LIFG who was living in exile in London. According to the Times, the TNC was seeking to distance itself from the LIFG due to its ties to al-Qa'ida. Another LIFG member interviewed by the Times noted the LIFG did not trust Western states' intentions in Libya, remarking: "I guess this is about making as much money with oil and weapons deals as possible." (Sources in contact with LIFG members tell Kronos the "senior commander" interviewed by the Times is none other than Belhadj.)⁵³⁹

July 15, 2011, the U.S. recognizes the TNC as the legitimate government of Libya during a Contact Group meeting held in Turkey. During this meeting, the Contact Group agrees to deal with the TNC, which they recognize as the legitimate government in Libya.^{540 541}

July 16, 2011, a rare meeting occurs between Qadhafi regime envoys and U.S. diplomats, who advise the only way to move forward is for Qadhafi to step down.

July 27, 2011, rebels win diplomatic recognition from Britain, which expels the remaining Qadhafi regime diplomats from London.

Abd-al-Fattah Yunus, the TNC's top general whose high-profile defection from the Qadhafi regime was announced early in the revolution, is assassinated on July 28, 2011. Speculation mounts that LIFG-affiliated rebels who sought revenge for Yunus' actions against radical Islamists while affiliated with the Qadhafi regime are behind the assassination.

July 29, 2011, The Associated Press quotes Mohammed Agoury, a deputy of Yunus, as having reported the general was killed by members of the February 17 Martyrs' Brigade. Fighters of the February 17 Martyrs' Brigade had participated in the front-line battles against Qadhafi's forces. Led by Ismail al-Sallabi, the brother of Libyan Revolution spiritual guide Ali al-Sallabi, several of the group's high-ranking figures are believed to be affiliated with the LIFG.⁵⁴²

August 3, 2011, Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam tells The New York Times the regime is forging a behind-the-scenes alliance with radical Islamist elements among the Libyan rebels to drive out their more liberal-minded confederates. The revolution's spiritual figurehead Ali al-Sallabi promptly denies this claim.^{543 544}

August 4, 2011, TNC Chairman Mustafa Abd-al-Jalil announces the formation of an ad hoc investigative committee to "learn the truth" of the assassination. He threatens to impose the "severest punishment against the perpetrators."⁵⁴⁵

August 8, 2011, TNC Chairman Mustafa Abd-al-Jalil dismisses the TNC's entire executive committee. The 14-person committee consisted of the top officials who provided oversight of the TNC's financial, defense, and communications concerns. Jalil cites "administrative mistakes," including incompetence evident in the investigation of the Yunus assassination, among the reasons for his action. Jalil announces Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril would select new members of the TNC's executive committee, pledges to conduct a more thorough investigation of the Yunus' death, and claims the assassination was part of a larger "conspiracy."⁵⁴⁶

August 11, 2011, rebels capture part of the oil town Brega, but Qadhafi's forces still hold western areas of the city where the oil infrastructure is located.

August 14, 2011, rebels take the center of Zawiyah, which is located near Tripoli. Their advance cuts off the Qadhafi regime's access to the coastal highway which leads to Tunisia, on which food and other supplies are delivered into Tripoli.

August 15, 2011, in a call broadcast on Libya's state television Qadhafi lobbies his supporters to liberate Libya from the rebels and NATO. He remarks, "Get ready for the fight. The blood of martyrs is fuel for the battlefield."⁵⁴⁷

Also on August 15, 2011, rebels report they have captured Garyan, through which a major highway links Tripoli to Qadhafi's desert stronghold Sabha.⁵⁴⁸

August 16, 2011, rebels report they have cut off roadway access to Tripoli.⁵⁴⁹

August 20, 2011, explosions and gunfire rattle Tripoli, where Qadhafi's forces are losing control after days of battlefield defeats in nearby areas.

August 21, 2011, Belhadj, who other rebel military leaders assert had previously taken little public part in the revolution, leaps onto the radar after claiming credit for the siege of Qadhafi's Baba az' Azia palace. Through what other prominent rebel military leaders described as an unanticipated power play, Belhadj becomes the rebel military leader of Tripoli, assuming control of a third of the country's populace, along with a major stake of Libya's wealth. In what the Middle East Media Research Institute, MEMRI.org has described as a "highly symbolic" interview, Belhadj declares: "We [i.e. rebels] want security for our country and justice and prosperity for our people... [the justice and prosperity] for which we have been calling over the past 40 or 41 years."⁵⁵⁰

August 29, 2011, Belhadj accompanies TNC Chairman Mustafa Abd-al-Jalil on a trip to Qatar to visit with the revolution's financiers and NATO officials. February 17 Martyrs' Brigade Commander Ismail al-Sallabi, the brother of Libyan revolution spiritual leader Ali al-Sallabi and leader of a 3,000-man militia credited with defending Benghazi, is also a member of the delegation that meets with NATO officials.^{551 552}

August 30, 2011, TNC Chairman Jalil pointed to Belhadj's participation in the meeting with Western officials in Qatar as evidence he was someone the council could trust. "He doesn't pose a threat to the world's safety," Jalil advised.⁵⁵³

In September 2011, heightened claims of certain rebel militia leaders' intentions to elevate Salafist agendas begin to emanate from Libya.

September 3, 2011, The Irish Times reports Sheikh Ali al-Sallabi is among the most politically influential figures in Libya. A cleric who is the so-called "spiritual leader" of the Libyan revolution, al-Sallabi is closely affiliated with Qatar-based Global Muslim Brotherhood Leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi. In his interview with The Irish Times, al-Sallabi acknowledges his ties to Belhadj span more than a decade.⁵⁵⁴

Also on September 3, rebels discovered secret documents in the Tripoli offices of the regime's external security forces which reveal the post-9/11 cooperation between the regime, MI6, and the CIA. These documents demonstrate how British and American intelligence organizations worked with the regime in coordinating the renditions of LIFG emir Belhadj and LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi, who were imprisoned at Abu Salim prison.⁵⁵⁵

On September 4, 2011, major U.K.-based news organizations begin reporting on Belhadj's claims that Britain's MI6 knew he was being tortured while at Abu Salim prison. The allegations surfaced along with signs that the discovery of a cache of secret MI6 and CIA documents at an abandoned government office building in Tripoli was triggering political panic over Britain's role in the CIA's post-9/11 rendition programs.⁵⁵⁶

In an interview with Reuters, on September 5, 2011 February 17 Martyrs' Brigade Commander Ismail al-Sallabi, the brother of the revolution's spiritual leader Ali al-Sallabi, calls for members of the TNC's executive committee to resign. "The role of the executive committee is no longer required because they are remnants of the old regime. They should all resign, starting from the head of the pyramid all the way down," he charges.⁵⁵⁷

September 8, 2011, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reports the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya is preparing to monopolize the political environment in Tripoli.⁵⁵⁸

September 11, 2011, rebel militia leaders meet at an Islamic institute in Tripoli. Their negotiations focused on establishing a unified military command are interrupted by the arrival of Belhadj, who is accompanied by MajGen Hamad Ben Ali al-Attayah, the chief of staff of Qatar. According to news reports, Belhadj advises the others: "You will never do this without me." Belhadj disputes this story in later discussions with reporters.⁵⁵⁹

Also on September 11, 2011, Qadhafi's son Saadi flees to Niger.⁵⁶⁰

In an interview with Al Jazeera on September 12, 2011 that was prominently featured on its website the following day, Ali al-Sallabi calls Prime Minister Jibril and other liberal members of the TNC "secular extremists," and claims they are working to usher in a "new era of tyranny and dictatorship." He is reportedly furious that PM Jibril refused to give the Muslim Brotherhood more than one ministerial portfolio in the government he was planning to create, leading TNC officials to speculate more assassinations may be forthcoming.^{561 562}

September 12, 2011, thousands gather to celebrate the rebels' rise to power in Tripoli's Martyrs Square. TNC Chairman Jalil addresses the crowd and describes the state the TNC intends to create: "We strive for a state of the law, for a state of prosperity, for a state that will have Islamic Sharia law as the basis of legislation." He thanks NATO, the United States, and various Arab countries for their support of the rebels during the 6-month-long war. Perhaps in response to growing criticisms that the TNC has not appointed women to any leadership roles, Chairman Jalil assures the audience the new government will focus on the interests of women and the country's youth. Accordingly, women will be appointed to run some ministries and embassies. No women appear on stage with the TNC's officials. Calling on Libyans to build a state based on the rule of law, Chairman Jalil says, "No retribution, no taking matters into your own hands and no oppression. I hope that the revolution will not stumble because of any of these things."⁵⁶³

September 14, 2011, an anti-Islamist, anti-Sallabi rally in Martyrs Square attracts only a few dozen demonstrators. The same day, The New York Times reports Abel al-Rajazk Abu Hajar, a Muslim Brotherhood figure, is leading the Tripoli Municipal Governing Council, where Islamists are reportedly in the majority. The Times further notes that Belhadj "has become so much an insider lately that he is seeking to unseat Mahmoud Jibril, the American-trained economist who is the nominal prime minister of the interim government, after Mr. Jibril obliquely criticized the Islamists."

September 15, 2011, Belhadj downplays rumors of clashes between Islamists and liberal TNC officials in an interview with Al-Sharq Al-Awsat. Responding to the question of whether he agreed with his friend Ali al-Sallabi's demand for TNC Prime

Minister Mahmoud Jibril's resignation Belhadj remarks, "What is more important is that the outcome of this should serve the interest of the nation, this is what concerns us. I believe that these comments have reached Dr. Jibril and many of those who were given tasks, and they welcomed these comments and received them with an open heart and not in a bad or negative way, hopefully."⁵⁶⁴

September 19, 2011, Belhadj discusses the revolution at length. Asked about his vision for political system after the fall of Qadhafi, Belhadj asserts "the previous course of the Islamic Fighting Group (changing Al-Qadhafi's regime) is the course that represents the wishes and aspirations of the Libyans." Asked if he would be content with a secularist government, Belhadj states: "We do not have a problem, but perhaps others might have (a problem with the Islamists). Now, we have started to breathe the new air of freedom. I hope that what the Libyans have lived during this short period will be a motive for preventing an irresponsible behavior related to the exclusion or other issues. We have been and we will continue to confront exclusion tendencies that always claim that the Islamists impose dangers on the society, and have intentions that lead to instability and to threats to the security of the country and of the region, and so on. These claims are not true. We will not behave in any other way than to further the security of the country first and the stability of the region second, and we will have equal relations with all, which will be based on mutual respect and joint interests."⁵⁶⁵

September 20, 2011, Ali al-Sallabi, echoes the calls for Prime Minister Jibril's resignation in an interview with Reuters. Al-Sallabi says he is backing Abdulrahman Sweilhi, who Reuters describes as a moderate Islamist with a power base in the city of Misrata. Sweilhi, a critic of Qadhafi, was imprisoned in March.⁵⁶⁶

September 25, 2011, TNC authorities announce the discovery of a mass grave which is believed to contain the bodies of some 1,200 prisoners massacred at Abu Salim prison in June 1996.⁵⁶⁷

September 26, 2011, Ali al-Sallabi calls on French President Nicolas Sarkozy to respect the Libyan people's "options" to determine who will serve as prime minister. The remark is ostensibly issued in response to Islamists' concerns that the French president plans to support Jibril's candidacy.⁵⁶⁸

September 27, 2011, Belhadj publishes an oped regarding the situation in Libya in The Guardian. Addressing the TNC's exclusion of Islamist elements among the interim government's top decision makers, Belhadj advises, "What worries us is the attempt of some secular elements to isolate and exclude others. Libya's Islamists have announced their commitment to democracy; despite this, some reject their participation and call for them to be marginalised. It is as though they want to push Islamists towards a non-democratic option by alienating and marginalising them."⁵⁶⁹

September 29, 2011, Abdulrahman Sweilhi, a candidate for prime minister who is supported by Ali al-Sallabi tells the press, "We have some reservations about the behavior and way affairs have been managed in the previous months. We also have reservations about certain statements that are being made to the press. All these issues drove us to form the view that Mahmud Jibril is not the man who is capable of leading the country in the forthcoming stage." He complains of unilateralism in the decision-making process controlled by an unnamed "faction" of TNC officials.⁵⁷⁰

October 6, 2011, it is reported Samil al-Saadi intends to sue various British governmental entities for the roles they played in his family's rendition to Libya.⁵⁷¹

October 11, 2011, LIFG spiritual leader Sami al-Saadi speaks with Camille Tawil about the revolution. Asked if the LIFG's Corrective Studies were still applicable al-Saadi replies, "We tied the issue of banning confrontation with the state to good and evil. I do not think it is right or correct now to open these studies and address the revolutionaries by telling them: Do not raise arms. They were in a self-defense position. The revolution began as peaceful. The people took to the streets to tell Al-Qadhafi we do not want you. They said this with their voices and bare chests. He surprised them with anti-aircraft guns and tanks; that is, with violence. Thus, they were defending themselves. It would be wrong and naive of us to tell them: Do not defend yourselves. I say this so that the corrective studies would not be taken as absolute words at any time and in any place. This issue (confrontation of the state) is tied to good and evil. This is the opinion of the majority of religious scholars." Al-Saadi reported the LIFG had declined Usama bin Laden's invitation to join what would become al-Qa'ida. "We did not wish to become involved in an external issue," he explained. He also expressed gratitude for NATO's role in the revolution, but cautioned that the presence of Western military forces would not be welcomed in Libya.⁵⁷²

October 13, 2011, discussing the political atmosphere in Libya with Camille Tawil, LIFG leader Abd al-Wahab al-Qayid, the brother Core al-Qa'ida Sharia officia Abu Yahya al-Libi, says he looks forward to "an end to the chapter of oppression and subjugation."⁵⁷³

By mid-October, news reports suggest rebel military groups are becoming increasingly factious. Belhadj, citing support from TNC Chairman Jalil, calls for all heavy weapons to be put under his command or moved out of Tripoli. The Wall Street Journal reports on October 17 that Qatar has funneled 20,000 tons of weapons to rebel fighters. Accordingly, the contents of 18 known weapons shipments flown into the country by Qatar with permission from Western intelligence, along with the contents of a dozen or so Qatari-funded shipments of ammunition supplied via Sudan, are delivered directly to select rebel military groups — not to the TNC. Interim leaders express frustration over the continued flow of arms from Qatar to these groups even after the fall of Tripoli.⁵⁷⁴

October 19, 2011, Prime Minister Jibril advises Time magazine he is quitting; he does not reveal the date upon which he intends to resign.⁵⁷⁵

October 20, 2011, after Qadhafi's convoy is hit during a NATO airstrike a Misrata-based rebel group takes custody of Qadhafi outside his hometown of Sirte. Although reports about Qadhafi's subsequent death are conflictive, footage of Qadhafi's captors beating and taunting him, coupled with accounts provided by standers-by indicate he may have been executed by the rebels who captured him. The bodies of Qadhafi and his defense minister are put on public display in a refrigerator in the port city of Misrata for four days. On October 25, they are buried in unmarked graves at an undisclosed location.

On October 21, 2011, during an interview with Jennifer Griffin of the Fox News Channel, the TNC's ambassador signals that Libya's new government may not intend to compensate the U.S. for expenses incurred while helping the rebels overthrow the Qadhafi regime.

October 22, 2011, Prime Minister Jibril tells Reuters he is stepping down "today."⁵⁷⁶

October 23, 2011, TNC Chairman Jalil announces Libyan law will be based on Sharia: "We, as an Islamic state, determined that Islamic law is a major source for legislation, and on this basis any law which contradicts the principles of Islam and Islamic law will be considered null and void."⁵⁷⁷

October 24, 2011, TNC Chairman Jalil orders an investigation of Qadhafi's death.⁵⁷⁸

October 25, 2011 Rissa ag Boula, an advisor to Niger's president, tells the press Qadhafi's son Saif al-Islam plans to decamp from Libya to seek refuge in Niger via Algeria. The government of Niger was heavily subsidized by Qadhafi.⁵⁷⁹

Also on October 25, Qadhafi's former intelligence chief Abuzed Omar Dorda suffers serious injuries after he falls from the second story of the building where he is held. Reports on the incident are conflictive, with some indicating he attempted to commit suicide, while others suggest his captors attempted to kill him.⁵⁸⁰

October 26, 2011, The Associated Press reports Qadhafi's intelligence chief Abdullah al-Sanusi, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court, has fled to Niger and is hiding along the country's border with Algeria.⁵⁸¹

October 27, 2011, TNC Vice Chairman Abel Hafiz Ghoga says Qadhafi's killer(s) will face trial.⁵⁸²

October 31, 2011, Abdurrahim al-Keib succeeds Jibril as the interim prime minister, receiving 26 of 51 votes from members of the TNC.⁵⁸³

Also on October 31, NATO's mission officially concludes in Libya.⁵⁸⁴

November 4, 2011, TNC Prime Minister Abdurrahim al-Keib says it will take more time to disarm Libya's militias than previously pledged. He also advises, "We will not force people to take quick and hasty decisions and actions and come up with some laws that just prevent people from holding arms."⁵⁸⁵

November 10, 2011, Ali al-Sallabi announces he has formed a new party to compete in Libya's 2012 elections. The party's name, The National Gathering of Freedom, Justice, and Development, is said to be a nod to both Turkey's ruling party, the Justice and Development Party, and the party organized by the Muslim Brotherhood in neighboring Egypt, the Freedom and Justice Party. Discussing the party's platform, Ali al-Sallabi, an outspoken critic of secular liberals serving in the TNC, says that "This is not an Islamist party but a nationalist party." He then acknowledges the party's "political agenda respects the general principles of Islam and Libyan culture." He reports Belhadj has endorsed the party. Ali al-Sallabi also says he will not run for president.⁵⁸⁶

November, 19, 2011, rebel fighters led by Osama al-Juwali, a militia commander from Zintan, capture Saif al-Islam as he attempts to flee to Niger. They fly him back to Zintan and demand he face trial in Libya.^{587 588}

November 22, 2011, al-Keib announces his appointments for his cabinet, asserting "All of Libya is represented." To the surprise of some onlookers, al-Keib appoints Osama al-Juwali, who is among the rebel commanders who have downplayed Belhadj's role in the siege of Tripoli, to serve as the TNC's defense minister. Reporting on the appointments, Al Jazeera notes that in forming the new government the TNC "faced the tricky task of trying to reconcile regional and ideological interests whose rivalry threatens to upset the country's fragile stability."⁵⁸⁹

November 24, 2011, rebel fighters from Zintan detain Belhadj as he attempts to board a flight at Tripoli International Airport, where Zintan's militiamen provide security. TNC Chairman Jalil demands his release so that he may proceed with an important humanitarian mission to visit with Libyan rebel fighters receiving medical care in Turkey. Days after his arrest the British press reports Belhadj had actually traveled to Turkey to meet with Free Syria Army leaders in Istanbul and on Syria's border with Turkey. The source of this account shared that Belhadj had discussed the prospect of sending troops to train Syrian revolutionaries. It is also reported that Turkish officials participated in the meetings between Libya's delegates and Syrian oppositionists, who had visited Libya earlier in the month to hold preliminary meetings focused on channeling arms to Syrian fighters.^{590 591 592}

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November 28, 2011, downplaying tensions with other rebel militiamen Belhadj indicates the Tripoli Military Council would be supportive of the newly formed government: "I hope that it (the new government) will be granted all the support needed for it to carry out its tasks. I am aware of certain opinions accusing it of being imbalanced in terms of representing all regions, but we hope that it would be allowed to carry out its duties to render the country stable and secure." He continues, "As revolutionaries, we are concerned with supporting this government and all the ministers including the defense minister. We will coordinate and cooperate with the defense ministry ... Our relationship with the defense minister is good." Discussing plans for disarming of rebel fighters under his command Belhadj advises, "It is not on our agenda right now. This is a two-sided solution ... We call on the government to recruit the revolutionaries into the ministries and public institutions," adding: "We have to wait for the plans and programs of the relevant ministries and the corresponding plans and programs to be initiated by the revolutionaries."⁵⁹⁴

Early in December, in a move that may be made to reduce Belhadj's influence the TNC vows to disarm Tripoli by the end of 2011.⁵⁹⁵

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