

Libya moves into Asia to build for new terrorist conference

by Mary McCourt

While the United States and its allies have taken no military action to follow up the May 4-5 Tokyo Summit condemnation of Libya for promoting international terrorism, Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi has been working hard. During May, his personal envoys spread throughout Asia to bring Qaddafi's demands for condemnation of the April 15 U.S. raid on terrorist installations in Tripoli to government leaders. This was only the beginning. Not satisfied with the results of the March 14-18 Tripoli conference, where plans were laid for international coordination of terrorist and separatist groups' operations, Libya now wants to hold another, higher-level Tripoli conference in September, with representatives of national political parties from around the world, a reliable source reported. Qaddafi will now be pulling every political string he can, to get his envoys into Europe and even the United States to "explain the Libyan position," and to stop any action against terrorism.

Qaddafi has ground to exploit. In Asia, economic crisis, precipitated by disastrous U.S. "free market" policies, and the State Department-run collapse of the pro-American Marcos government in the Philippines, have made national leaders vulnerable to anti-American agitation—and Libyan-funded "liberation movements."

Qaddafi is doing to Asia what he has done for years to Western Europe: running training camps in Libya where terrorists are been trained to bomb U.S. military installations, airports, and defense-connected industry, while funding "peace" and separatist movements. In Germany, the Qaddafi-funded Green Party, which has won up to 10% of the vote in state elections, aims to pull West Germany out of NATO.

Qaddafi has stepped up operations since April 15. One of the first countries to feel pressure was Pakistan, where Qaddafi has already recruited several thousand mercenaries for his "Islamic Legion." On May 24, Shah Ahmad Noorani, head of the Islamic party Jamiat I Ulema I Pakistan, called on former members of the Pakistani armed forces to volunteer for a 500,000-man force to fight for Libya against the United States. Noorani told a rally he wanted to have 100,000 men ready soon to help fellow Moslems in Libya. The force, which at peak levels would be bigger than Pakistan's regular 450,000-strong army, would be trained, equipped, and kept on alert for rapid deployment, he said. Noorani, an influential figure among opposition politicians, urged the U.S. Congress to impeach President Ronald Reagan for what Noorani called

his barbaric bombing of helpless men, women, and children in Libya.

Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq, who had previously denounced opposition leader Benazir Bhutto by claiming she was being funded by Libya, himself received Qaddafi's special envoy Abdul Ati Al Obeidi, on May 9, the Pakistani press reported. Obeidi is a former foreign minister of Libya. Former Pakistani Federal Secretary of Information Nasim Ahmed wrote in a letter to the British *Sunday Telegraph* May 25, "According to available reports, General Zia made no complaint to the envoy . . . about Libya's alleged involvement in movement for democracy in Pakistan." Instead, Ahmed said, it was reported that Zia made "noises of sympathy" to the envoy, and has done nothing to date to remove the Pakistani pilots who operate Qaddafi's French-made equipment.

Pressure increased on May 30, when the U.S. consulate in Karachi was attacked by two gunmen. This was the same day that police arrested several Afghan and Libyan students for questioning about the bombing of the Saudi and Pan-Am airlines offices on May 20, in which one person was killed and six injured.

Qaddafi also has his supporters in Bangladesh—to the increasing consternation of President Ershad, who held elections May 5 in an attempt to consolidate his military government. On May 16, the President of the Islamic Revolutionary Council on Bangladesh, Hajji Mohammad Abdullah, sent a cable of support to Qaddafi, proclaiming that the "American-NATO barbaric aggression on the Libyan Arab people was tantamount to the final warning to Muslims," and called on Muslims to face up to the "10th Crusade" led by Washington against the Arabs. In a cable addressed to Qaddafi, Abdullah said that thousands of Bangladesh's people were ready to move anywhere Qaddafi asked them to.

Libya has already attempted several times to undermine Ershad. Last January, Bangladesh expelled top Libyan operative Salem Ibrahim, reportedly a paymaster for terrorist groups abroad, who had entered the country claiming to be the Libyan envoy. Ibrahim had earlier met in Singapore with Abdur Rashid, one of the assassins to Bangladesh founding President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. Rashid has since financed dissidents against the Ershad regime. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* on May 29, several of the Bangladesh Army officers involved in the assassination took

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asylum in Libya. Recently, some of them visited Bangladesh to sound out elements of the army on whether they would be interested in a coup against Ershad., although they returned to Libya failing to obtain support.

India, alone on the Subcontinent, has kept Qaddafi very much at arm's length, but Qaddafi is trying to use the Non-Aligned Movement as a means to apply pressure there. Although it is known that members of at least one Sikh organization attended the March 14-18 Tripoli conference, and it is reported that Libya has given funds to Muslim groups in India, Libya has denied any connection with terrorism against the Indian government. On April 19, a Jana news release reported that a source at the Libyan People's Committee of the People's Bureau for Foreign Liaison denied allegations published by the Indian daily *Hindustan Times* April 19, that Libya is connected to acts of terrorism by the Sikh movement.

The source "voices regret," Jana reported, "at the fact that [the *Hindustan Times*] has fallen victim to this deceptive American campaign which also seeks to infringe on the leading role of India in the Non-Aligned Movement."

Although India joined the Non-Aligned in condemning the April 15 raid on Tripoli, it did so only on the basis of violation of national sovereignty. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi roundly condemned all forms of terrorism.

Spreading East

Qaddafi is also moving quickly in East Asia. As the Tokyo summit began on May 4, he broadcast over Libyan radio and on a Japanese TV station his demand that the summit end, calling it a "crime against mankind." On Libyan radio, Qaddafi called for Japanese demonstrations "in order to prevent Reagan, the child-killer and criminal, the second Hitler, from landing in Japan. . . . How can Japan receive the child-killer?"

In a commercial TV interview broadcast in Tokyo, Qaddafi called on the Japanese to try to force the cancellation of the summit, which he called a "meeting of killers." Qaddafi proclaimed, "We must be the one to denounce terrorism because we are the victims."

When Qaddafi sent a personal envoy to Southeast Asia later in May, he himself prepared the way by calling up all the government leaders to demand they meet with Libyan foreign ministry official Mohammed Ahmed Sherif. Sherif visited Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia—all nations plagued with Muslim fundamentalist movements—during the week of May 19, to urge these nations to join Qaddafi's call for a U.N. conference on international terrorism. In Thailand, he met with Foreign Minister Siddhi Savestila, who later voted against the United States in the U.N. vote on the April 15 Tripoli raid. In Indonesia, the reception was cooler, but Qaddafi has more aces to play there.

Sherif succeeded in seeing Indonesia's President Suharto, although the Libyan delegation arrived in Jakarta May 20 with little advance notice, according to the *International Herald Tribune*. "Indonesia will, at the right time, think

about the kind of support, if any, it will give to Libya in the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement," was Suharto's reserved response to Sherif, who reportedly told Suharto that the Third World must come up with an alternative to "the American definition" of terrorism. At a press conference in Jakarta May 23, Sherif had challenged President Reagan to produce proof of Libyan involvement in international terrorism.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, did not meet with Sherif, because he was on a visit to Nigeria during Sherif's stop-off in Indonesia. However, just after the April 15 raid, Mochtar stated that Jakarta disagreed with the U.S. action, but would support concerted international moves against terrorism.

Indonesia has good reason to want to stop terrorism. A delegation of the "Free Papua Movement," which operates in Indonesia-controlled Irian Jaya, went to the March 14-18 Tripoli conference, and since then, according to Australian officials, a spokesman for the guerrillas said that Libya has offered the group help. The Indonesian military calls the Free Papuans a poorly armed, rag-tag operation, with little support in Irian Jaya, but the Australians stated that, given aid, the movement could become a threat. An agreement was reportedly reached in Tripoli to set up a "revolutionary committee" to include New Guinea, and the Southwest Pacific, including New Caledonia and Vanuatu.

Other nations in Southeast Asia are not immune. There are reports that Libya is now getting involved in funding Muslim fundamentalists in Malaysia, already getting money from Iran.

In Thailand, government officials stated May 29 that Muslim separatists are supported by Saudi Arabia and Libya. A splinter group of the PULO separatists, the Barisan Bersatu Mujahideen Patani, was founded last Sept. 16 by Haji Hassan, apparently inspired by Saudi Arabia. Thai officials could neither deny or confirm that this group maintains contacts with the Iranian embassy in Bangkok or the Libyan Peoples' Bureau in Kuala Lumpur, but did state that the separatist group, which wants to set up an independent Islamic regime in Patani province, was helped both by Libya and Saudi Arabia.

In the Pacific, Libya's staunchest supporter is the regime of Father Walter Lini, prime minister of the Republic of Vanuatu. Lini stated April 22 that the U.S.-NATO "failed barbaric aggression against the Libyan Arab people is considered as a violation of all international norms and conventions." Vanuatu, formerly the New Hebrides French-Anglo colony, announced June 7 that it was establishing diplomatic relations with Libya. Lini begins negotiations this month with the Soviet Union for a docking agreement for Soviet fishing vessels, which may also be allowed to fish in the 200-mile exclusive fishing ground that Vanuatu claims. U.S. Pacific fleet commander Admiral James Lyons, warned Vanuatu at the end of May against relations with Libya, to keep the Pacific free "of the cancer of international terrorism."