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From Libya to Ukraine The Regime Changers

by RENEE PARSONS

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On the off-chance you have not been paying attention for the last couple of weeks, the US State Department, led by Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, embarked on and succeeded in an overthrow of the legitimately elected government in Ukraine.

In considering the US State Department's participation in the Ukrainian coup, it might have surprised some Americans to realize how deeply embedded the State Department was as a behind-the-scenes player, thoroughly invested in creating a "spontaneous" rebellion. So now, the paying-attention segment of the American public has realized that the State Department, the supposed-diplomatic arm of the US government, has been doing less diplomacy and negotiation and more organizing a team of hooligans to disrupt-and-destabilize as it gives a well-timed thumbs-up to the CIA or whoever it is who accomplishes their evil deeds.

Keeping the State Department's Ukrainian role in mind, you might wonder what neo-con favorite Hilary Clinton was doing during her four years as Secretary when she traveled to 112 countries, met with 1700 world leaders and racked up 956,733 miles to the kudos of the American press as the most traveled Secretary of State in history. Well, that's a lot of ...diplomacy. Some how I don't think she was brushing up on her conversational French or appreciating Hungarian palascinta or learning new dance steps in South Africa. Having visited

an average of 425 leaders a year is some serious sightseeing ...so what exactly was she talking about to 1700 world leaders?

A review of Clinton's Official State Department Travel Schedule as Secretary is worth more than a quick scrutiny especially when a series of ambiguous meetings in 2011 with the Libyan Contact Group (LCG) jumps off the page. Perhaps the LCG were a rag tag group of well-meaning Libyans caught up in the Arab Spring phenomena – but no, they were anything but. In a nutshell, the LCG was a US sponsored UN-like organization (but without the UN's democratic principles) to provide the necessary political cover and create the illusion of international acceptance for the US illegal designs on Libya by fomenting a 'rebellion' to oust Muammar Qaddafi. Formed on March 19 in London, the original Libya Contact Group consisted of two dozen self-appointed countries lacking the international authority to make decisions and take action regarding the sovereignty of another country. The LCG had no legal standing, acted outside the standards of international law and was not accountable to anyone. It is politically noteworthy that the BRICS countries (Brazil, India, Russia, China and South Africa) all either refused to participate or only sent occasional observers.

From piecing together her meetings with the LCG (according to her official travel schedule), it is obvious that Secretary Clinton was the senior coordinator that brought all the loose ends together, the Superstar that made the illegal ouster of Qaddafi possible and destroyed the country of Libya.

A review of that travel schedule reveals that no other 'crisis' received Clinton's hands-on attention in such an intimate way and that the Clinton-CLG meetings occurred simultaneously as the 'rebellion' in Libya unfolded escalating into a civil war with US/EU and NATO bombings culminating with Qaddafi's grisly murder. Of special interest is how the rebel group, the National Transitional Council (NTC), formed on the same day the rebellion began in Benghazi, fitting neatly in to the timeline.

Granted Gaddafi was not a democratically elected warm-and-fuzzy leader and his reputation for funding terrorism and downing commercial airliners around the world did little to enhance his reputation but the US has never before let an odious, unscrupulous dictator stop them from being buddy-buddy. The US has never refused a relationship with some of the world's scuzziest leaders who stole their country's wealth, sold their country's natural resources to the highest bidder or who had no idea how to spell democracy much less put it into practice. So ok, Qaddafi's government was a military dictatorship but what are trade partners for if not to grab their oil, sell them weapons and establish a strategically-placed NATO base. Let's agree that Qaddafi was not the sort of individual you would bring home to meet the family. The principle here is cabinet-level US leadership coordinating international efforts to unseat the leader of another sovereign country.

Qaddafi and US: Libya Relations

Without spending considerable space on the US's lengthy, turbulent history with Libya that begin in 1801 with the Barbary War ("to the shores of Tripoli"), there are elements of that history relevant to Qaddafi's removal.

Just as the UN declared Libya an independent state in 1959, 'sweet' oil was discovered in east Libya with the State Department proclaiming that Libya had "hit the jackpot." Occidental Petroleum won drilling rights in 1966, King Idris was overthrown in 1969 in a bloodless coup and Muammar Qaddafi took control of the country and closed the US Wheelus Air base.

By the early 1970's, Qaddafi nationalized Libya's banking system and oil fields with a reserve of 44 billion barrels, the largest in Africa and with an historic low extraction rate of 1.65 million barrels a day, Libya has the ninth largest reserve in the world.

In 1986, President Reagan ordered Operation El Dorado Canyon to bomb Libyan targets in retribution for its role in a London bombing and it was the downing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland that affirmed Libya as a pariah state for its support of terrorists.

Once the Bush Administration lifted all sanctions and restored diplomatic relations in 2004, every European country followed suit and Libya stepped onto the world stage granting its first oil exploration licenses in almost four decades. By 2004, Libya participated in the US rendition program and Lionel Richie arrived to give a concert in 2006. The following year, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that Libya had been removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Libya opened its borders to a privatized banking system in 2005, assorted international conglomerates agreed to multi billion dollar deals and Libya's on and offshore oil fields were open to offers. In 2008, Libya was granted a seat on the UN's Security Council with no opposition from the US even though in 2009 he called for elimination of the Security Council as denying equal representation to all countries.

In what was considered a major diplomatic turn-around, after the Bush Administration signed a comprehensive claims agreement in August, 2008 to resolve outstanding terrorist-related claims against Qaddafi's government that underscored its 'vital partnership against terrorism,' Secretary Rice met personally with Qaddafi in Tripoli. Rice's September, 2008 visit was touted as a new chapter in bilateral relations in Libya. It was the first high-level US visit after 30 years of isolation by a US Secretary of State since 1953.

Qaddafi had sought better relations with the West as he condemned the 911 attacks, cracked down on al-Qqeda presence in Libya and dared to suggest that President Obama seek an overture with bin Laden. Despite whatever moves Qaddafi made to satisfy the US unquenchable thirst for oil, one suspects that his earlier anti-imperialist stance would always haunt his relations with the west.

Sometime after that 2008 meeting and Barack Obama's inauguration and Hillary Clinton's swearing in as Secretary of State in January, 2009, re-engagement efforts with Libya went awry as US foreign policy regarding Libya shifted dramatically – it is noteworthy that Secretary Clinton's official schedule does not show the same level of attention to the ongoing crisis occurring in Egypt and Tunisia. Mubarak (termed a "close family friend") resigned on February 11 and there were no meetings with Friends of the Muslim Brotherhood or any of the other Arab Spring constituents.

The question arises why the Obama Administration changed US policy so dramatically towards Libya and why did the Obama neocons find Gaddafi more objectionable than the Bush neocons? Surely, he could have been wooed with some shiny new F16's, sweet-talked to widen his doors to Big Oil or were reports that Qaddafi's 144 tons of gold might finance a new gold-based currency enough to push the US, with its fragile dollar, to act. Unfortunately for Qaddafi, he was not a Vladimir Putin – he proved to be more easily outfoxed and overwhelmed by American influence and not particularly politically sophisticated.

February, 2011

By February, 2011, events moved quickly as Qaddafi was an 'evil and vile' dictator with Secretary Clinton offering rebels 'any type of assistance' in their ouster of Qaddafi.

Historically, a complicated amalgam of distinct tribes with primordial roots that made up Libya, a well-organized opposition led by the National Transitional Council (NTC) suddenly surfaced on February 15, controlling Benghazi and Zawiya, an important port city with refineries and the oil-rich east Libya leaving the more populated west Libya and Tripoli secure in Qaddafi's hands. On February 24, President Obama announced that Clinton would travel to Geneva to "intensify our consultations with allies and partners" regarding the crisis in Libya. Given what we know today about Nuland's efforts in Ukraine, we can only imagine what 'intensify consultations' might entail.

According to her official travel schedule, Clinton's first recorded discussion on the crisis in Libya took place on February 28 at a conference on disarmament in Geneva within days of the seizure of Libya's vital oil resources.

On February, 26, the UN Security Council adopted its first Resolution 1970 regarding sanctions.

March, 2011

On March 10, Secretary Clinton indicated to the NY Times that she expected to meet with unidentified rebel leaders 'in the United States' and during upcoming trips to Tunisia and Egypt.

On March 17, the UN adopts a second Libyan Resolution 1973 sponsored by the US which was touted as a no-fly zone, sometimes confused by neocons as humanitarian intervention. A massive military intervention that included over 110 Tomahawk Cruise missiles with the combined air power of the US, France, Canada and the UK pummeled Libya back to its ancient root- city of Cyrene.

In case you are not familiar with the concept of humanitarian intervention, the Clinton Administration can take credit for popularizing the incoherent theory that military attacks are an appropriate use of force in order to prevent the spread of violence. A third world country of devastating poverty, Libya was no match for the Numero Uno bully on the planet and most formidable war machine the world has ever seen.

On March 19, Secretary Clinton attended a “Summit” in Paris, France and an international conference on March 29 in London, England – both on the Libyan crisis.

NATO assumed control of the air strikes with a bombing blitz that continued until October 31, 2011.

April, 2011

Secretary Clinton attended a NATO Conference in Berlin in mid-April with Libya on the agenda and “absolutely determined to continue its operation for as long as there is a threat against Libyan civilians.”

The LCG met on April 13 in Doha with UK Foreign Secretary William Hague presiding. There is no record that Clinton attended the Doha meeting.

By late April, the US Ambassador to Libya Gene Cretz announced that the US would assist with authorizing international oil deals with the Transitional National Council (TNC). Cretz went on to state that “although the group didn’t gain a full diplomatic recognition, it proved it was a political organization that was worth the States’ support and by helping them in exporting oil, millions of dollars would be added to the rebels’ funds.” If the Congress was a shadow of its former self that once conducted rigorous investigations, it would be vital to have the background on how these contracts were let and who gave Cretz the authority to allow the TNC access to Libyan oil. Qaddafi was still alive but presumably it had already been decided, his demise was only a matter of time.

May, 2011

On May 5, Secretary Clinton was in Rome to attend a Libyan Contact Group meeting.

By the end of May, President Jacob Zuma of South Africa visited Libya on a mediation mission with Qaddafi who agreed to a ceasefire but not to step down. Both NATO and the rebels rejected a ceasefire.

June, 2011

Secretary Clinton attended a meeting of the Libyan Contact Group on June 9 in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates announcing a \$25 Million humanitarian aid package bringing total US aid to Libya at \$81 million. At that time, Clinton announced official recognition of the NTC as Libya’s “legitimate interlocutor.”

Coincidentally, on June 9, the Libyan rebel government made their first sale of oil to the US. It apparently made no difference that Qaddafi was still head of state.

By the end of June, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Qaddafi for ‘crimes against humanity’ as NATO bombings continued.

JULY, 2011

Secretary Clinton attend the fourth meeting of the Libyan Contact Group in Istanbul, Turkey on July 15. As Qaddafi was still struggling to hold onto power, Secretary Clinton formally recognized the TNC as the ‘legitimate governing authority’ for Libya as the group provided “assurances that it will pursue a process of democratic reform... It also pledged to disburse funds in a transparent manner to address the humanitarian and other needs of the Libyan people.”

That same day, representatives of thirty countries of the LCG lined up for a photo op to internationally bestow their blessing on the TNC as Libya’s ‘legitimate authority.’”

On July 1, President Obama, in justifying the US violation of the war powers act and having provided no evidence of Libya’s threat to national security, referred to Qaddafi as “a guy who was a state sponsor of terrorist operations against the United States of America is pinned down, and the noose is tightening around him.” White House staff had apparently forgotten to brief the President that Libya was removed from the list of state sponsored terrorism by President GW Bush.

August, 2011

On August 29, Secretary Clinton attended the next meeting of the Libyan Contact Group in Istanbul, Turkey.

Rebels enter Tripoli on August 21 and the Human Rights Watch offered to meet with the TNC to discuss the rule of law.

September, 2011

Secretary Clinton attended a senior level meeting of the Libya Contact Group in Paris.

Ever anxious to find new clientele, the World Bank recognized the TNC as the legitimate government of Libya willing to help restore the country’s economy while the African Union, which had floated its own peace plan, was not ready to endorse the TNC. Meanwhile, the international petroleum industry was debating how long it might take to increase petroleum output and Qaddafi’s whereabouts were unknown.

October, 2011

During Secretary Clinton’s unannounced visit to Libya on October 18 she expressed the “hope he can be killed or captured soon.” And she got her wish on October 20 with NTC pledging democracy and fair elections in 2013.

March, 2014

With the country still mired in chaos and violence, many of the same LCG players whose participation destroyed Libya beyond Qaddafi’s wildest dreams held a ‘ministerial conference’ to

consider Libya's future. It was a fitting time for the UN's committee on sanctions to report that Libya is the "primary source" of the illegal weapons trade that is "fueling conflicts in at least 14 countries around the world and that three of its oil ports are in control of armed rebels."

In addition, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 2146 banning the illicit sale of crude oil from Libya.

In retrospect, it is apparent that the entire LCG operation will ultimately be recognized as an epic Obama foreign policy blunder yet to be recognized. And Clinton's stunning lapse of moral judgment and the circumvention of the UN's established processes, provided a general framework, a broad lesson plan for Victoria Nuland to use in Ukraine.