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The US raid on Libya and the fraud of the war on terror

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8 October 2013

US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel proclaimed Sunday that two covert operations mounted by US Special Forces in Libya and Somalia over the weekend “send a strong message to the world that the United States will spare no effort to hold terrorists accountable, no matter where they hide or how long they evade justice.”

Far from strong, upon any serious examination, the message sent by these operations is decidedly murky.

The abduction in Libya of alleged Al Qaeda operative Abu Anas al-Liby and the abortive Navy Seal raid on a leader of the Al Shabab Islamist militia in Somalia—called off after it encountered stiff resistance—are being treated by the US media as some monumental new battle in the never-ending global war on terror.

Al-Liby, who has been indicted in a US court on charges related to the preparation of the 1998 terror bombings at the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in which 224 people died, is reportedly being held on a US warship in the Mediterranean—beyond the reach of civilian courts and laws and being subjected to unknown methods of interrogation.

Counter-terrorism experts, ex-agents, and former cabinet members are being paraded before the television cameras in an attempt to rope in the American public, implicating it in another criminal operation by Washington.

For all of the blather from these experts, however, on one thing they are totally silent: the extraordinary history of al-Liby, the target of the US raid. A review of his career points to not some implacable struggle between mortal enemies, but rather a falling out between intimate partners. It is no exaggeration to suggest that Mr. al-Liby knows some of those who planned his capture on a first-name basis. His biography provides a glimpse into the bizarre and frightening world of the CIA and its secret wars, dirty tricks and global murders.

Al-Liby joined Al Qaeda when it was fighting in Afghanistan in the 1980s, providing the foot soldiers for a covert CIA-organized war for regime change against the Soviet-backed government in Kabul. At the time, then-US President Ronald Reagan hailed al-Liby and his fellow right-wing Islamist fighters as the “moral equivalents of America’s founding fathers,” while the US government poured some \$10 billion into financing the war.

This relationship was not merely Reagan’s innovation. For decades before, US imperialism had promoted reactionary Islamist organizations to further US interests and combat socialist and left-nationalist influence in the Middle East and beyond. These layers provided the shock troops for CIA-orchestrated coups in Iran, Indonesia and elsewhere.

After the Afghan war, al-Liby reportedly followed Bin Laden to Sudan, where he continued to enjoy US and Western backing. It was during this period of the 1990s that Al Qaeda funneled Islamist fighters into Bosnia to go into battle for the US-backed Bosnian Muslim regime. In 1993, Bin Laden received Bosnian citizenship and a Bosnian passport. Al Qaeda terrorists were also sent into Kosovo to join the separatist movement against Serbia, which by 1999 was backed by a full-scale US-NATO air war.

In 1995, Sudan forced Bin Laden to send his Libyan followers out of the country in response to pressure from Libya’s head of state, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Shortly afterwards, Bin Laden himself would also be asked to leave, as Sudan faced pressure from Egypt, where an Al Qaeda-affiliated group had attempted to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak.

While Bin Laden went to Afghanistan, al-Liby found political asylum in the United Kingdom, Washington’s closest ally, on the grounds that he would face persecution in Libya.

In 2002, it was revealed that six years earlier al-Liby had been a key figure in a Libyan Islamic Fighting Group cell that was paid large sums of money by the British intelligence service, MI6, for an abortive plot to assassinate Gaddafi.

For nearly two years after the African embassy bombings, al-Liby was able to continue living in the UK, fleeing only in May of 2000 around the time he and 20 other Al Qaeda operatives were indicted in a Manhattan federal court as co-defendants of Osama in the African terrorist attacks. He was placed on the FBI's "most wanted" list.

After a decade as a wanted terrorist, al-Liby returned to Libya in 2011 and once again was transformed into a US-backed "freedom fighter," joining one of the Islamist brigades that served as proxy troops for the US-NATO war for regime change.

Why, two years after the toppling and assassination of Gaddafi, al-Liby has been snatched off the streets of Tripoli is by no means clear. His presence there was known to Washington from even before the war began. It is, however, part of a pattern alternating between close collaboration and falling out between the US intelligence apparatus and Al Qaeda. This is a pattern that goes a long way to explaining how the 9/11 terror attacks could take place—i.e., how Al Qaeda operatives known to the CIA could freely enter the US, take flying courses, and prepare the mayhem of September 11, 2001.

This same phenomenon was seen in the September 11, 2012 Al Qaeda assault on US diplomatic and CIA facilities in the eastern Libyan port city of Benghazi, in which the US ambassador, Christopher Stevens, and three other Americans lost their lives. Stevens had played the instrumental role in coordinating US military action with operations of Islamists like al-Liby.

In the aftermath of the war, the CIA established a major secret station in Benghazi for the purpose of shipping arms stockpiles to similar elements being employed in the war for regime change in Syria. Something caused the relationship to sour, likely involving resentments among the Islamist militias that they had not been adequately compensated by their American patrons in terms of money or power.

The kidnapping of al-Liby by Delta Force commandos—ostensibly with no notification to the Libya's nearly powerless interim government—only underscores the real results of a war promoted by the Obama administration as a crusade for human rights, democracy and freedom. Having claimed thousands of lives and destroyed much of the country's infrastructure, the war has left Libya in a complete shambles, dominated by Islamist militias and petty warlords, rife with assassinations, kidnappings and torture and its oil production and other core economic activity at a virtual standstill.

Among the most staggering elements of this predatory war is that pseudo-left organizations, from the International Socialist Organization in the US to the Socialist Workers Party in Britain and the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) in France hailed it as a revolution, acting to politically facilitate the total destruction and subjugation of a former colonial country.

For the last dozen years, Washington has justified military aggression abroad and the implementation of police-state methods at home in the name of a never-ending war on terrorism. Over the course of this period, the Bush and Obama administrations' principal achievement consists of overthrowing two secular Arab regimes—in Iraq and Libya—and attempting to do the same to a third one in Syria. Each of these interventions has devastated the societies of these countries.

While Al Qaeda did not exist in any of these three countries before US intervention, it now thrives in all three. Tens of thousands from all over the region have been drawn to its banner in the US-backed sectarian war for regime change in Syria.

In the biography of al-Liby, the real character of the so-called war on terror emerges more clearly. It is the byproduct of multiple filthy operations mounted by US intelligence, using elements like Al Qaeda, betraying them and then dealing with the consequences in the form of terrorist operations, which are then turned into the pretext for wars abroad and state repression at home.