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Last Gasp: Gadhafi Mercenaries Mass in Tripoli

By Jason Ditz

February 23, 2011

Checkpoints [have sprung up across the city of Tripoli today as long-standing dictator Moammar Gadhafi has ordered thousands of foreign mercenaries and militiamen, some wearing parts of different uniforms, some in plainclothes, to try to shore up his last real stronghold in the nation.](#)

Major protests were held in Tripoli against the regime in the past few days, but today, at gunpoint, the loyalists are demanding residents to pledge loyalty to Gadhafi or face summary execution on the streets.

Protesters [have been making major inroads into Western Libya](#), and are in the process of setting up an [informal interim government in East Libya](#), but the regime, such as it is, clearly hopes to cling to power in Tripoli as long as it can.

How long will that be? It is hard to pinpoint, but clearly the Gadhafi regime is on its last legs, and their control over Tripoli appears tenuous, at best, and even then dependent on thousands of mercenaries with machine guns pointed at the average citizen. It seems hard to believe, then, that this measure is anything but the last gasp of a dying dictatorship.