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Gadhafi Ratchets Up Attacks on Rebel-Held Zawiya

By Jason Ditz

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Long seen as the “gateway to Tripoli,” the capture of the city of Zawiya was seen by many as a decisive moment for the rebels in West Libya and it is, [unsurprisingly, the target of much of the Gadhafi regime’s counter-offensive in the region.](#)

The attacks on Zawiya have escalated over the past several days, and residents on the ground say that in addition to sporadic air strikes, the city’s outskirts are now under near constant bombardment from tanks.

[Some 40-50 tanks are said to be involved in the bombardment, but their fire is not reaching the center of the city,](#) and the rebels appear to still have solid control over this important city, though whether they can retain it going forward is another matter.



The concern in particular is that [Zawiya is such a strategic position for the rebels that if it falls to the regime it will bring the fighting to a virtual stalemate and will set the stage for what many fear is a long-term civil war](#) in the nation. Popular opinion is still decisively against Gadhafi, to be sure, but his ability to keep West Libya as a personal dominion in the face of the popular uprising will surely harm the rebel momentum which most had predicted would’ve already swept him out of office by now.