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Mixed Signals on Possible Occupation of Libya

By Jeremy Sapienza

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As rebels rush into Tripoli and the [imminent collapse of the 42-year Gadhafi regime approaches](#), much about Libya's future remains up in the air.

Though it's been insisted for months that there would never be US "[boots on the ground](#)" in Libya, an administration [known to play word games with military action](#) could yet have other plans up its sleeve. Other countries are talking about a "world role" in helping the Libyan rebels form a proper government — not least Italy, whose state oil company has already sent a team to Benghazi to talk crude.

The White House is still saying it [will not send any troops to occupy Libya](#) even if other countries do.

"If there is going to be some kind of transitional mission that involves any kind of foreign troops, there wouldn't be U.S. ground troops as part of that," Pentagon spokesman Dave Lapan told Reuters. However, there are many other types of personnel that would not come under the "troops" label, [including CIA operatives](#), known to be in the country as early as March.

And John McCain, a leading congressional proponent of the NATO war in Libya, spoke to Face the Nation about the coming struggle to build a democratic state in Tripoli due to disagreements among Libya's disparate tribes. He alluded to difficulties in Iraq and Afghanistan, the two countries where the US continues to be bogged down in nation building, before saying "[now it's](#)

[going to be up to us and the Europeans.](#)” It’s not clear what exactly this means, but it isn’t likely a hands-off plan.

The Associated Press paints other countries as eager to get in on the post-Gadhafi action, even saying in the headline that the world will “[plan future.](#)” Britain will soon release Gadhafi’s cash to the Transitional National Council to “help establish order” somehow, and France, ever more hands-on, will organize an international meeting to talk about the future of Libya. United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon said his organization was also planning meetings with various other international groups, and the European Union is making its own plans.

Qatar is less worried about an interventionist image, [openly providing military trainers and direct financing](#) of the rebel council. Qatar has also been [providing weapons](#); the Gulf state [gets most of its arms from the United States.](#)

Italy, for its part, was the first to rush to Benghazi after reports Tripoli was taken, [to discuss future oil projects with the TNC.](#) Libya has massive oil wealth and regime change will shake up the distribution of oil rights among many international corporations, and [some argue this was the goal all along.](#) The US and other countries’ oil conglomerates are poised to make out big after the recent war, and Italy’s Eni will have to scramble to retain rights the Americans sought to undermine, [according to leaked diplomatic cables.](#)

[Oil company shares rose 3-5%](#) since the rebels reportedly took Tripoli, and will certainly rise more with better regime certainty.