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IN THIS ISSUE:

- Goodbye Gaddafi
- NATO Update
- Iran's Alleged Assassination Attempt
- Kenyan Intervention in Somalia
- The Brussels Ministerial

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Gaddafi is Gone, but Questions Remain

By: James Bridger

On the morning of 20 October, a fleeing Muammar Gaddafi was pulled from a drainage pipe by Libyan rebels, only months after threatening to hunt them down "like rats." Just hours later the Colonel's death was announced to the world. Bloody footage of his last moments left little room for doubt or conspiracy.

Though the exact circumstances of Gaddafi's death remain clouded, a timeline is now being constructed through the compilation of eyewitness accounts and amateur footage. While many had speculated that Gaddafi had fled to Libya's southern desert or a neighbouring country, the Colonel's last stand was made in his birth city of Sirte. As it became clear that the city was about to fall into the hands of Misratan rebels, Gaddafi's convoy attempted to break the siege lines and escape the city. The convoy was then disabled and scattered after it came under fire from a French jet and an American Predator drone. Rebel fighters quickly descended on the scene, capturing Gaddafi after a shootout with his bodyguards.

A now viral video showed that the Colonel, seemingly begging for his life, was wounded, but still alive. Libya's former leader was then allegedly loaded into an ambulance bound for Misrata. The next series of videos and photos revealed Gaddafi to be dead; bullet wounds to his chest and temple were clearly evident. How the strongman received his fatal wounds is not yet clear.

The official line, put forward by Libyan interim Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril, is that the Colonel was accidentally shot in crossfire while being loaded into a truck. This version of events is contested however. *The Atlantic's* Max Fisher asks: "How, exactly, do two bullets of 'crossfire' happen to wiz their way through such a dense crowd and just happen to strike Gaddafi in the head and chest?" A senior member of the transitional government told Reuters that Gaddafi was beaten and killed by rebel fighters while in transport. The UN, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have all called for an investigation into what some have called "a summary execution."

The death of Gaddafi and the final end of his 42 year reign has been met with jubilation in Libya and across the world. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated that "this day marks a historic transition for Libya." NATO's top commander, Adm. Jim Stavridis, called it "a good day for NATO, a great day for the people of Libya. Contrasting sentiment came from the few remaining friends of the Gaddafi regime.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez expressed outrage at the Brother Leader's "murder," declaring that his country "will remember Gaddafi forever as a great fighter, a revolutionary, and a martyr." The state-run media of Zimbabwe similarly eulogized the former leader as "a hero who went down fighting and exposing the West's colonizing mission in Africa."

Adm. Stavridis announced that he will now recommend the end of the Alliance's mission in Libya. The decision will be made on 21 October at a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has stated that the Alliance will terminate its operation in coordination with the UN and Libya's interim government.

The new government of a free Libya still faces many challenges: antagonistic tribes must be reconciled, a new political system and electoral process needs to be implemented, and the country's oil wealth must be redistributed. That said, Gaddafi's death brings a sense of closure to 42 years of autocratic rule and eight months of brutal conflict. The future of Libya's people is uncertain, but it is now theirs to write.

Further Readings: [Libya after Gaddafi – live updates](#); [Violent end to an era as Gaddafi dies in Libya](#); [Accounts emerge of Gaddafi's final moments](#); [Qaddafi's few friends mourn death of a 'hero'](#)

NATO Outside the Headlines

By: Tom Aagaard

While most NATO news in the recent weeks has focused on the climatic finale of the Libyan Revolution, the Alliance has been busy with a range of activities around the world.

Unrest has flared up again in Kosovo as Alliance troops assigned to the KFOR peacekeeping force clashed with Serb protestors in the fledgling country's volatile north. In July, the predominantly ethnic Albanian government in Pristina sent security forces to two border checkpoints to enforce a trade ban with Serbia. Local Serbs, who reject Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence, reacted violently and established several roadblocks to prevent the Pristina government from exercising control. After Serb community leaders rebuffed repeated demands to restore freedom of movement, yesterday KFOR troops in riot gear moved in at dawn. The peacekeepers, supported by EU Police, scuffled with protestors as they tried to dismantle the improvised barricades of parked trucks, logs, stones, and mud. At least 8 KFOR members suffered minor injuries. Currently the overall outcome of the action is unclear although movement on at least one road has been restored. From Belgrade, Serbian President Boris Tadic urged all parties not to act rashly and suggested that nationalist groups in Serbia proper were likely unduly influencing the local Serbs.

On October 11, British Royal Commandos as part of Operation Allied Protector took part in a maritime hostage rescue with an anachronistic twist. After sailing into the Indian Ocean, the Italian cargo ship *Montecristo* was attacked and seized by Somali pirates. The crew of 23 issued a radio distress signal then retreated to a fortified safe room referred to as a citadel. Two ships assigned to the NATO operation quickly responded but their course of action was limited without knowledge of the crew's situation. Realizing this, the quick-thinking crew wrote a note explaining they were safe within the citadel, sealed it in a bottle, and dumped it out of a porthole attached to a flashing beacon. The message in a bottle was soon retrieved by one of the Alliance ships and shortly after Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship *Fort Victoria* launched a boarding party by zodiac and helicopter. Surrounded by Royal Commandos and without hostages to use as shields or collateral, the eleven pirates realized the futility of their situation and surrendered.

On September 21, NATO celebrated the launch of the second phase of the world's largest demilitarization project at its Brussels headquarters. After inheriting a colossal stockpile of ammunition and weapons from the Soviet Union, Ukraine has experienced a number of fatal tragedies as a result of their deterioration. In the last decade, there have been at least ten accidental explosions at munitions sites in the country, including one that caused at least half a billion Euros in damage. Through an ambitious NATO Trust Fund project, Ukraine has been recycling or destroying thousands of tons of explosives and hundreds of thousands of small arms. By eliminating these easily diverted tools of war, this NATO program is improving security far beyond Ukraine. Importantly, with Alliance support, the government has established a small arms destruction and recycling center and explosive waste incinerator that can serve the wider region. By the end of Phase II, the program will have destroyed 133 000 tonnes of ammunition and 1.5 million small arms and light weapons.

Iran's Alleged Assassination Attempt: Hollywood Plot Twists, Amateur Production

By: Jason Wiseman

On 11 October, the US Department of Justice announced that Manssor Arbabsiar and Gholam Shakuri, two men with ties to the elite Iranian Quds Force, had been charged in New York with taking part in a plot to kill Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States, Adel al-Jubeir, on US soil, a charge Iran flatly denies. The assassination was allegedly outsourced to the Mexican drug cartel Los Zetas with the intention of detonating a major explosion at the Saudi Ambassador's favourite Washington restaurant, Café Milano.

Two Iranians have been charged with conspiracy to murder a foreign official, conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction and conspiracy to commit an act of international terrorism [transcending national boundaries](#). Arrested on 29 September at New York's JFK airport, Mr. Arbabsiar, an Iranian-American used car salesman, is said to have confessed to the murder plot. He allegedly claimed that he was recruited and funded by men he believed to be part of the Quds Force. Mr. Shakuri, who US authorities say is a member of the Quds Force, remains at large.

America's Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the Department of Treasury were informed of the assassination plot through a member of Los Zetas who was in fact an informant for the DEA. Guided by US agents, this informant, identified only as "CS-1," agreed to cooperate with Mr. Arbabsiar to the point where he received a \$100 000 down payment from the Quds Force towards the \$1.5 million he intended to charge for the killing of the Saudi Ambassador. The money transfer into an overseas account was [identified by the Treasury Department](#) which had been monitoring the account due to its suspected ties of supporting Iranian operations overseas.

Despite Iran's consistent denial of any involvement, US officials have stated publicly and with confidence that Iran was indeed planning on assassinating a Saudi Ambassador on US soil. Eric Holder, America's Attorney-General, says the plot was directed by "factions of the Iranian government," while President Obama stated that "there are individuals in the Iranian government who were aware of this plan.

The Quds Force is a secretive unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Force (IRGC) responsible for overseas operations, including intelligence collection, assassinations, coups, and training of foreign guerrilla forces. According to ex-CIA operative Robert Baer, the Quds Force is known to be highly skilled at ensuring its fingerprints are far removed from any assassination plot or terrorist attack, instilling in the minds of their surrogates that the number one priority is to keep Iran's hand hidden at all costs.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the plot, this would not have been the first time that Iran staged an assassination on US soil. Most recently, Mohammad Reza Sadeghina was arrested in 2009 for plotting the assassination of Jamshid Sharmahd and Ali Reza Nourizadeh, two Iranian dissidents living in California and London. Sadeghina pleaded guilty and was convicted of soliciting someone to commit murder, but escaped to Iran during [supervised release](#). In addition to these plots, the Quds Force has been implicated in numerous assassinations and failed assassinations against Iranian dissidents in Europe and elsewhere. Including the 1991 assassination of Shapour Bakhtiar in Paris, the 1989 murder of Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou in Vienna and the 1992 killing of three Iranian-Kurdish opposition leaders at the [Mykonos restaurant in Berlin](#).

This leads us to a critical question. What motivation does Iran have to assassinate a Saudi Ambassador?

According to Robert Baer, the answer lies in the intensifying rivalry brewing between Iran and Saudi Arabia. First, as the only Shiite state in the region, Iran [rejects the existing Sunni order](#) of the Middle East and seeks to replace Saudi Arabia as the dominant power in the Gulf. Iran hopes their campaign will overthrow the Saudi monarchy, leading to a removal of the US presence in the Gulf and creating a domino effect that will pull the rug out from underneath the Sunni Muslim world, forever [rebalancing the power structure of the Middle East and beyond](#).

Second, since the 1979 Revolution, Iran has been in an ideological rivalry with Saudi Arabia for the hearts and minds of the Muslim world. Iran has consistently challenged the Saudi Wahhabist doctrine around the world and supports competing states and militant groups in an attempt to undermine Sunni theology and end its ideological and demographic dominance over Islam.

Third, Iran and Saudi Arabia are engaged in an ongoing competition for control over the Gulf's vast energy reserves. Since 55% of the world's energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf states collectively hold nearly two-thirds of the world's crude oil reserves, and about 35% of the world's [natural gas](#), domination of the region is critical to the future of the world's energy security, [something Iran desperately wants to control](#).

Fourth, having been locked in a sustained covert intelligence war with the US and its allies for years, Iran may deem this assassination plot a legitimate reprisal for the recent assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists which Iran claims were [conducted by the US and Israel](#). Since Saudi Ambassador Adel al-Jubeir is known for advocating military action against Iran, targeting al-Jubeir would go a long way in silencing their Saudi detractors, intimidating their rivals and greatly undermining any US attempt to [attack Iran's nuclear facilities](#).

So far the response towards this alleged assassination plot has been limited to condemnation, asset seizure and the promise of tougher sanctions. Aside from harsh criticism from a range of US and Saudi officials, the US Treasury has [frozen the assets](#) of Mr. Arbabsiar and Mr. Shakuri, as well as three other Iranians and Mahan Air, an Iranian airline. President Obama stated that the "toughest sanctions" would be pursued and that [no options would be taken off the table](#). In addition to this, Saudi Arabia has chosen to bring the alleged plot before the UN in the hopes that the Security Council could impose stringent reprisal measures against Iran.

The future implications of this alleged plot are unclear. If the plot is deemed true, a variety of Middle East security analysts contend, it could indicate the growth of a new and bolder Iranian agenda to undermine the US and its allies in their own front yards, or worse, signify that the Iranian regime has lost control of the IRGC, creating the possibility of an internal coup favouring more radical factions within the Iranian power structure. More definitively, verification of this plot would confirm the extensive inroads the Quds Force has made into North America, further jeopardizing America's southern border and its Latin American neighbours. The upcoming days and weeks will have a major impact on the future of Iranian behaviour, the credibility of US deterrence and the trajectory of the ongoing covert war between Iran and the United States.

Further Readings: [Reflections on the Iranian Assassination Plot](#); [Iran Plot's Wikileaks Link](#); [US Charges Two Iranians For Plotting Terror Attack](#); [Saudi Arabia Takes Iran to UN Over Alleged Plot](#); [The Devil We Know: Dealing With the New Iranian Superpower](#)

Kenyan Troops Go Where Others Fear to Tread

By: James Bridger

Despite attempts to brand itself as a luxury tour destination, Kenya has been unable to escape the harsh reality that it borders a failed state of Hobbesian proportions. Instability has spilled over in recent weeks, as Somali militants launched a series of daring raids into Kenyan territory: On 11 September Judith Tebbutt, a British tourist, was kidnapped after her husband was killed; three weeks later a disabled French woman, who has since died in captivity, was similarly abducted; on 13 October, two Spanish aid workers were seized from Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp. The abductions, coupled with the impact of Somali piracy, have dealt a major blow to Nairobi's \$800m-a-year tourism industry. The government's response has been robust: approximately 2000 Kenyan troops, supported by artillery and air power, have been sent into southern Somalia to rout al-Shabaab—the al-Qaeda-linked Islamist militia which Nairobi blames for the kidnappings. While some Western observers may disregard this as a minor operation in an insignificant—though perpetually violent—theatre, the outcome of the Kenyan incursion will have a dramatic impact on global counter-terrorism, regional security, and the EU and NATO-supported peace efforts currently underway in Somalia.

Ravaged simultaneously by famine, piracy, and Islamist insurgency, the failed state of Somalia has recently resurfaced on the global agenda after decades of neglect. As *The Guardian's* Simon Tisdall notes, the country "has become a vortex of instability, suffering and terror that radiates ever outward to affect all those within its orbit, even hundreds of miles out to sea." Perhaps no other state is more affected by Somalia's tribulations than Kenya. The East African country boasts a large ethnic Somali population, recently swelled by the near 500,000 refugees who have fled the famine. Nairobi is deeply concerned that al-Shabaab has been recruiting ethnic Somalis in Kenya into its ranks. The greater fear is that Somalia has become an international jihadist breeding ground, bringing a collection of foreign fighters from South Asia, Europe and even North America together for training under the al-Shabaab banner. Both NATO and EU have been providing financial and logistical support to the African Union force (AMISOM) that recently pushed al-Shabaab out of the capital Mogadishu. The US has also been quietly engaging in drone strikes against Shabaab targets in southern Somalia. Though Kenya is a close US ally, Washington was reportedly not forewarned of the incursion.

Nairobi's surprising decision to intervene in Somalia has been met with mixed reactions. The Somalis, not unlike their Afghan counterparts, have a historical record of hostility towards even the most 'well intentioned' foreign incursions.

Operation Restore Hope, a 1992-1994 UN mission involving 30,000 troops, ended in disaster after 18 US Rangers were killed in the infamous “Black Hawk Down” incident. A 2006 Ethiopian invasion succeeded in ousting the Islamic Courts Union from political power, but quickly devolved into guerilla war—paving the way for the rise of al-Shabaab. Fears have been raised that the Kenyan forces—inexperienced in counter-insurgency—will become similarly bogged down. Regardless of past failures, Tisdal describes the Kenyan decision as “a brave one that should be supported by western powers,” who are otherwise “at a collective loss over what to do about Somalia.”

Though the abductions are the declared *casus belli* for the Kenyan incursion, it is likely that the operation has been planned for some time, motivated by a broader Kenyan need to secure their porous border. The country’s interior minister describes the mission as a “legitimate act of self-defence necessary to protect lives and safeguard the Kenyan economy;” a response to “a chronology of provocation by al-Shabaab.” The militia, however, has denied a role in the kidnappings. The maritime nature of the first two abductions, coupled with the fact that the captives were reportedly brought to the pirate-infested port of Kisumayu has led many experts to conclude that pirate gangs, not Islamists, are behind the abductions. Despite the murky identity of the perpetrators, the kidnappings have garnered international support for Nairobi’s cause. Will Ross, the BBC’s East Africa correspondent, contends that the intervention “seems at least partially aimed at sending a message to the Kenyan people and the rest of the world that the issue of security is being taken seriously.”

The Kenyan offensive, dubbed “Operation Linda Nchi” (protect Kenya), has received the blessing of Somalia’s embattled Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the African Union force that supports it. On October 15, Kenyan troops captured the border town of Qoqani following aerial and artillery bombardment. The military is now moving to secure Afmadow, a strategic city located 120km inside Somalia. Though they have been slowed by heavy rains and poor roads, the Kenyan force plans to link up with TFG troops and anti-Shabaab militias for what is being described as “the mother of all battles.” Al-Shabaab are bringing in fighters from across southern Somalia to reinforce Afmadow, they have been seen digging trenches and constructing other fortifications. It is not yet clear whether or not Kenya and its allies will be able to take the city. Nairobi’s largely untested army is facing a guerilla force that has been fighting almost non-stop for the past five years.

If Kenya is able to secure Afmadow it will have a profound effect on the regional balance of power. Just to the south lies the port of Kismayo, whose taxes and pirate tithes have become al-Shabaab’s primary source of income. If the now largely undefended port falls, both Somalia’s Islamists and pirate gangs will be dealt a severe blow. Should al-Shabaab be defeated, there is the danger that a power vacuum may be created—a reprise of the 2006 Ethiopian invasion’s aftermath. The International Crisis Group reports that al-Shabaab’s weakness is already leading towards “a free-for-all contest in which clans are unilaterally carving up the country into unviable clan enclaves and cantons.” Nairobi has assured the TFG that they have no plans for an occupation of southern Somalia. The Kenyan exit strategy will likely involve equipping and supporting local forces that are antipathetic to the Islamists. The goal is to create a buffer zone which will prevent Somali violence from spilling into Kenya.

It is the stated platform of both NATO and the EU to help African countries tackle African problems. Nairobi, poised to remove a sanctuary from both jihadists and pirates alike, should therefore be supported in its risky endeavor.

Further Readings: [Kenya raises the stakes](#); [Kenya troops 'advance into Somalia near Afmadow'](#); [Kenya says making gains against al-Shabab](#); [Kenya's intervention in Somalia is a brave move](#); [As an enemy retreats, clans carve up Somalia](#)

The Brussels Ministerial: Tentative Optimism for NATO

By: Ryerson Neal

NATO defence ministers congregated in Brussels for their biannual summit on 5 October. It was the first ministerial since June, when then US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates made waves by intimating an ominous future for the alliance. The tone of this month's summit was decidedly more upbeat, with the apparent triumph in Libya providing most of the morale-lift. As Defence Minister Peter MacKay put it, the Libyan campaign had "truly reinforced the *raison d'être* for NATO."

While Gaddafi's fall has undoubtedly brought some relief to NATO leaders, it has also given rise to new questions and debate about the conclusion of Operation Unified Protector. Reports suggest that members arriving in Brussels were far from unanimous on what constituted a "mission accomplished." Indeed, NATO leadership was careful to remain vague about an end-date, saying only that the mission would continue "as long as threats persist." Alliance leaders may be leaving the mission intentionally open-ended in light of concerns that fighting amongst the various anti-Gaddafi factions might make further intervention necessary. The US Secretary of Defence maintained that, while NATO will work in consultation with Libya's National Transitional Council, any decision to end the mission will rest solely with NATO's political leaders.

It was the first ministerial for new US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta. While the Secretary did not back down from his predecessor's entreaties for greater European burden sharing, he did take a more optimistic view of the alliance's prospects. According to Panetta, NATO has "emerged stronger" from the Libyan mission, despite the divisions and deficiencies the campaign revealed. "In this challenging fiscal environment," said the Secretary, "partnerships like NATO are even more essential to protecting our common interests." His words likely come as a relief to European members who had been ruffled by Gates' blunt criticism of their defence commitments just a few months ago.

A reinvigorated spirit of transatlantic cooperation was evident in Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero's announcement that his country would host four American Aegis cruisers as part of Europe's nascent missile defence system. While welcoming the cruisers for the role they will play in European security, Zapatero appeared almost more excited about the economic boost the ships will give his country's sluggish economy. Spain is now the latest of several NATO members to solidify their commitments to the missile shield. Upon hearing the announcement, the Russian Foreign ministry quickly reiterated its long-standing objections to the project, though the events of the ministerial suggest that NATO is going ahead regardless of Russian reservations.

Secretary-General Rasmussen was happy to welcome not only the agreement, but also an apparently growing enthusiasm for his oft-touted "Smart Defence" concept. Secretary Panetta appeared supportive of the idea, marking a departure from his predecessor's position that collaborative Smart Defence would not make up for fundamental spending deficiencies in some NATO countries. Although ministers have only warmed to Smart Defence "in principle," they have promised concrete proposals in time for the 2012 Chicago leaders' summit.

Minister MacKay appears to be one of the converted, endorsing the concept as a necessary way to cut costs. Indeed, the minister will likely welcome any initiative to boost burden-sharing and possibly moderate Canada's NATO outlay; he suggested as much when he said that Canada's allies would have to appreciate that the Canadian military might soon have to re-focus on its domestic responsibilities.

It was an unambiguous hint that Canada, having already been an active participant in Libya and Afghanistan, might be looking for a breather.

Further Reading: [Secretary Rasmussen's Opening Statement](#), [Secretary-General's Press Conference](#), [Press Conference - Rasmussen](#), [US Secretary of Defence](#), [Prime Minister of Spain](#), [Russian Foreign Ministry Response](#), [Secretary Panetta's Press Conference](#), [Second Day Press Conference](#), [Interview with Minister MacKay](#), [LA Times Report on Ministerial](#), [Guardian reports on NATO concerns about Libyan endgame](#)

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