

**Hot Topic****WHAT DOES COLONEL QADHDHAFI'S ADMISSION MEAN?****By Vladimir Orlov, Director, PIR Center****[This article was originally published in Russian in *Yaderny Kontrol*, No.4, Vol. 9, Winter 2003]**© *Yaderny Kontrol*, 2004. All rights reserved

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*Abridged version*

On December 19, 2003, after ten months of secret talks with the United States and the United Kingdom, Libya declared that it was renouncing efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including its nuclear program, and would destroy WMD components in its possession as well as delivery vehicles with a range exceeding 300 km.

On the following day, Libya began negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). They led to IAEA Director-General Mohamed El Baradei's visit to Libya and to the Libyan decision to sign the Additional Protocol to the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

"Now Libya will play its international role in building a new world, free from weapons of mass destruction and all forms of terrorism," stated the country's leader, 61-year-old Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi. "We do not have any WMD. You know, there are many rumors, propaganda against Libya, when we simply have nothing to hide. There are so many countries in the world that possess nuclear programs, but in reality only a few have WMD. These countries disclose their nuclear programs. So that I simply followed their example," Mr. Qadhafi clarified. He said, further, that Libya would "become just the second country, after South Africa, to disarm voluntarily."

Libya ratified the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1975. In 1980 it signed the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. The country belongs to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (the Treaty of Pelindaba). Libya is also a member of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). At the same time, for the past three decades the Libyan Jamahiriyya repeatedly figured in western

official and unofficial expert lists of states of concern due to the risk that they might proliferate WMD and means of their delivery.

At times there were serious bases for this concern.

In the second half of the 1970s Libya, which possessed large reserves of petrodollars at the time, attempted with the aid of Soviet organizations to create a complete nuclear fuel cycle, including both a heavy-water reactor based on natural uranium, and a heavy water production facility. Although the leaders of the Soviet government and nuclear authority were ready to go ahead with the transaction (the Libyans had promised a sum on the order of \$10 billion), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced its disagreement, and in the end this reasonable approach prevailed. Libya also manifested an interest in Pakistan's nuclear weapons, and tried to develop nuclear cooperation with Belgium, Argentina, and Brazil, frequently in the pursuit of dubious goals.

Nor did BTWC participation prevent Libya from moving forward with work on biological weapons. As representatives of U.S. and U.K. intelligence organizations now testify, Qadhafi showed them "dual purpose biological agents, which can be used both legally (for civilian purposes) and for military purposes."

But where Libya was truly successful was in its creation of chemical weapons. Not a member of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) - the country joined it only in early 2004 - Libya was able to produce about 100 tons of toxic substances at the Rabta chemical plant, possibly retaining up to about 80 tons of mustard gas to this day: at least, the Americans and Englishmen who visited Libyan CW facilities speak of "tens of tons," though produced "about a decade ago." In contrast to the nuclear program, the presence of a developed CW program in Libya was not news for the experts.

Finally, Libya evinced interest in increasing the distance of its delivery systems, collaborating with, among others, North Korea, India, Iran, China, and Serbia.

After December 2003, *statements of intent* by Libya took the form of concrete agreements on the dismantlement of existing arsenals and those in the process of being created. This was an unprecedented step, by which a state ends all its military programs in the sphere of WMD and means of their

delivery, and places their dismantlement under international control.

Of course, the comparison with South Africa is not completely correct: that nation voluntarily destroyed its nuclear weapons, foregoing the status, though unstated, of an actual nuclear power. Qadhdhafi parted with much a more modest operation.

In contrast to its chemical program, at the time of Qadhdhafi's announcement of his *acknowledgement of guilt* Libya's nuclear program was in the very initial stages. El Baradei estimates that Libya was three to seven years away from possessing its own nuclear explosive device.

According to IAEA, Libya began a nuclear program in the early 1980s but halted it in 1992. In July 1995, the Libyan authorities made a strategic decision to reinvigorate its nuclear activities, including gas centrifuge uranium enrichment. Components for the centrifuge program began to arrive in Libya from foreign manufacturers in 1997, and shipments continued until a German freighter, the *BBC China*, was seized – by an intelligence tip of Libyans themselves – in October 2003. aboard were centrifuge components manufactured in Malaysia and transported via Dubai. The head of the Pakistani nuclear-weapon program, A.Q. Khan, and his network also gave Libya designs of a second-generation nuclear weapon.

According to IAEA personnel, what they have seen in Libya already is enough to open their eyes to the ineffectiveness of the international system of export controls and to the scale of the nuclear *black market*.

In fact, the meager data we possess already allows us to see how particular states, primarily Pakistan, skirted international pressures and barriers and supplied centrifuge and other equipment to Libya.

The degree of the involvement of individual states and the chains linking state and non-state players in Libya's WMD and missile programs must still be studied in detail. This, undoubtedly, will help us to better understand what opportunities (apparently, as gaping as ever) are open to those who are seriously determined to obtain WMD and means of their delivery.

What were Colonel Qadhdhafi's motives? First of all, he is interested in the smooth transfer of authority to his son, Sayf al-Islam, and, in order to avoid internal con-

vulsions and external pressure, he decided – as early as 1988 – on a strategic union with the West. Last December this political swing reached its logical conclusion. Sayf al-Islam clearly formulated this new policy – his own and his father's – when he said: "It will pave the way for the normalization of political relations with the (United) States and with the West in general and also will lead to the elimination of any threat against Libya from the West and from the States in particular." We should particularly note that Libya entered into talks with the United States and the United Kingdom prior to the beginning of the war in Iraq.

The seventh largest producer of oil in the world and, most likely, location of one of the largest reserves in the world, Libya is returning to capitalism, opening the door to Spanish, Italian, French, and now British and American companies. Its friendship with the USSR (which, incidentally, was never strong) is already ancient history. Qadhdhafi's attempts to play first fiddle in the Arab world failed and caused him such deep disappointment, that they led him to turn towards black Africa. There was a lot to be found in this relationship, but no sources for economic prosperity. Therefore a *return to the West* was almost inevitable. The president of the United States responded to Qadhdhafi's move just as Tripoli expected: "Its (Libya's) good faith will be returned."

What might the international consequences of Libya's voluntary disarmament be?

*First*, and this is most important, the Libyan precedent emphasizes the advantages of a *diplomatic* solution to questions related to nonproliferation. We see that diplomacy, even when secret in its initial stages, has serious possibilities. Through the use of diplomacy we can open up worrisome WMD programs more successfully than via military operations.

*Second*, the Libyan decision demonstrates the effectiveness of UN sanctions as a tool against states supporting terrorism or developing secret WMD programs. Indeed, the sharp turn in Libyan policy occurred under the influence of international sanctions, and in many respects was caused by them. It is indicative that an editorial in the *New York Times* on the morning after Qadhdhafi's declaration noted the "value of... UN sanctions" against Libya in the country's decision to choose the option of nonproliferation.

*Third*, the Libyan situation should mean the larger involvement of the IAEA, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and, possibly, other international organizations. It is remarkable and gratifying that, in the case of IAEA, this is already happening, and that Libya has joined the OPCW. The IAEA leadership must be completely unquestioned in its dismantlement of Libya's nuclear weapons program and monitoring of the complete and irreversible destruction of all its components.

*Fourth*, the Libyan decision is a signal to those states in the Middle Eastern region and elsewhere in the world that still expect to count on their secret WMD programs. Moreover this is equally a signal to Syria, which now faces a tough and urgent decision with respect to its chemical weapons program; and to North Korea, which is playing nuclear and missile games with the United States and the international community and is on the verge of fouling out; and for Israel, which, due to the patronage of the United States, for some reason has been beyond criticism, while it should not be an exception, and its nuclear weapons and military nuclear program, as the IAEA recently noted, should be put under monitoring and then dismantled, most likely as an intermediate step in the creation of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East.

*Fifth*, when we say "Libya," we should now thrice think "Pakistan."

Pakistan is the main proliferating state in the world today. Traces of its nuclear technologies can be found in North Korea, Iran, and now Libya. Who else has benefited from its *nuclear brains* still has to be determined, though three nations has been clearly identified by A.Q. Khan's revelations and further investigation by the Pakistani leadership. They are Libya, Iran (in mid- to late 1990s), and Iraq (in 1990). Pakistan's last deliveries to Libya, it appears, occurred after September 11, 2001, when the United States strongly warned President Musharraf about the inadmissibility of *sharing* nuclear technologies and received the appropriate promise from him. Pakistan is an unstable and weak state, where the central government does not control significant swaths of territory and where international terrorist organizations find sympathy. Can the international community continue to be reconciled to a nuclear Pakistan that is a proliferator?

And finally, *sixth*, the Libyan decision, or, more exactly, the way it came to that decision, is a lesson for Russia as well.

Russia cannot remain outside of the process of deciding the vital, concrete questions relating to the struggle against global WMD proliferation. This would contradict our declared foreign policy. We should more actively make use of the traditional ties and levers of influence that remain to us. A successful example of Russia's involvement in the solution of a critical proliferation problem was the painstaking work with Iran in the past few years and particularly past few months, in large part thanks to Moscow, and already subsequently through the efforts of Berlin, Paris, and London, leading to Iran's signing of the Additional Protocol in the same days last December when Libya was opening up information on its nuclear program.

It does not make sense for us to remove ourselves from the dialogue with our traditional partners, like Syria.

But if in certain situations Russia would be better off acting alone, in most cases we would work more fruitfully *in concert* with the United States. The best example of this sort of concrete cooperation in the past few months is the removal of spent nuclear fuel from research reactors in Central and Eastern Europe (Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania). The geography of this cooperation has now been extended to the former Soviet states.

And it is not by chance that, on March 8, 2004, Russia imported nuclear fuel from Libya's Tajura reactor – eighty eight fuel rods, with 14.6 kg of highly enriched U-235. It as a visible result of Russia – US – IAEA cooperation., and it should be applauded.

If the softening in Washington's tone with regard to Iran finally takes place – under a Kerry-led administration or, though much less likely, under Bush Jr. - lets us look into the distant future and – although today this still seems a fantasy – suggest that we consider the possibility of joint Russian-U.S. projects to develop peaceful nuclear energy in Iran. This is precisely the sort of cooperation that could serve as a guarantee against mutual suspicion, and against the emergence of secret nuclear weapon programs.