

LIBYA

The history of modern Libya begins with the Ottoman Empire. In 1843, in the province of Cyrenaica, Muhammad ibn 'Alias-Sanusi established the first "Sennusi" Muslim "Zawiyah" (Lodge) near the ruins of Roman Cyrene. The "Grand Sanusi", as the founder was later called, preached purity of belief and strict obedience to the Koran. But his movement was more than just a fundamentalist revival. The Sennusi Order, or "Brotherhood", not only instructed the faithful in "right" doctrine, it provided material assistance as well, creating a truly unified community. Sennusi doctrine soon spread throughout the province and other areas to the south. As a result, the order's headquarters moved to the oasis of Jaghbug near the Egyptian frontier. Muhammad's son, Sidi Muhammad Idris al-Mahdi, transferred it farther south in 1895 to the Al-Kufrah oasis.

The Ottoman Turks supported the order gladly. They welcomed its opposition to the spread of French political influence northward from Chad, feeling this influence was aimed at weakening their hold on Libya. In 1908, a number of reforms sparked by the "Young Turk" revolution were instituted, to strengthen this hold. The Italians, however, had other ideas. They had long standing banking and other commercial interests in Libya and believed the Ottoman's incapable of defending it. In 1911, in a fever of nationalist expansionism, they launched an invasion. After desultory resistance, the Ottomans sued for peace in 1912.

But the Italians found it far more difficult to subdue the local population than to defeat their Turkish masters. Resistance to Italian occupation was fierce and continued through World War I. After the war, Italy considered coming to terms with Libyan nationalists in Tripolitania and with the Sennusi, who's stronghold remained Cyrenaica. Negotiations accomplished nothing. But with the establishment of Fascism in Italy in 1922 came a strong governor, Giuseppe Volpi, a man of ideas. Volpi's solution to Libyan resistance was aggressive colonization. The lure of rich coastal farmland around Benghazi and other areas of the Tripolitanian coast brought Italian peasants in large numbers to settle there, supplanting the small native population. Tripolitania was successfully pacified by 1923, establishing a unified political base for further Italian expansion. But in Cyrenaica, 'Umar al-Mukhtar, led a determined resistance movement until his capture and execution in 1931.

During WWII, Libya became a major battlefield, as hundreds of thousands of Axis and Allied troops struggled, not so much over Libya itself, but over its strategic position as a threat both to the Suez Canal and Britain's Middle Eastern oilfields. Once the Italians and Germans were ejected, the Allies were faced with the problem of what to do with the place. They couldn't agree on any other policy, so Libya gained its independence by "default".

Libya, therefore, did not come about as a result of strong historic or geographic imperatives. There was the unifying effect of the Sennusi movement, Italian colonialism, and the discovery of large oil deposits in the late 1950s. But, the Sennusi movement never really penetrated Tripolitania and Italian colonization was short-lived. When it comes right down to it, oil is what Libya is all about. Sudden oil wealth has been both a boon and a curse to the Libyans. Since its discovery, political, social, and economic changes have been swift and far reaching, making any coherent discussion of modern Libyan history extremely difficult.

To begin with, the country is enormous. It is larger than the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi combined. Largely desert, Libya has never had a large population or wielded substantial political power. Even the name "Libya" was created by the Italians. Historically, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the country's two principal regions, were more closely linked with Tunisia and Egypt than with each other. During Ottoman rule there were two functional capitals, Tripoli in the west and Benghazi in the east. When the country became independent in 1951 it took the form of a monarchy under its one and only king, "Idris I". But the monarchy didn't last. In September 1969, a group of eleven army officers led by Muammar Al-Qaddafi took control. By 1970, Qaddafi was sole ruler.

The son of an itinerant Bedouin farmer, Qaddafi was born in a tent. He proved to be a talented student and graduated from the University of Libya in 1963 and the Libyan Military Academy in 1965. A devout Muslim and ardent Arab nationalist, Qaddafi early began plotting to overthrow the Libyan monarchy. After the coup in 1969, Captain Qaddafi was named commander in chief of the armed forces and chairman of Libya's new governing body, the "Revolutionary Command Council". He then promoted himself to colonel.

Qaddafi's first move as the country's new leader was to close all US and British military bases and expel most of Libya's native Italian and Jewish population. In 1973, he nationalized all foreign-owned petroleum assets. He also outlawed all alcoholic beverages and gambling in Libya, in accordance with Islamic law. Next, he attempted to join Libya with various other Arab countries in political unions, but without success. He has repeatedly demanded the total annihilation of Israel and this has made him a leader of the so-called "Rejectionist Front" among Arab leaders. In the 1970's he earned a reputation as an international agitator when his government was linked to several abortive coup attempts in Egypt and the Sudan. In 1975, Egypt accused him of trying to annex large tracts of that country's Western Desert. In August of that year, Egypt transferred large numbers of troops to the Libyan frontier to eliminate this threat. Minor skirmishes broke out between Egyptian and Libyan troops before things quieted down. During Morocco's long struggle with "Polisario" forces in Spanish Sahara, Qaddafi was the Polisario's main source of weapons. Indeed, in spite of his expressed concern for Arab unity, relations between Qaddafi and other Arab countries have remained ambiguous.

Islam, as practiced by Qaddafi, combines a nationalized economy with "People's Congresses", labor unions, and other mass organizations. He is well known for erratic and unpredictable foreign policy. His government has financed a broad spectrum of violent revolutionary and terrorist groups. These include the "Black Panthers" and "Nation of Islam" in the US and the "Irish Republican Army" in the UK. Squads of Libyan agents have assassinated his opponents abroad and he has been connected to several bloody terrorist attacks in Europe. On March 2nd, 1977, the General People's Congress declared that Libya was to henceforth be known as the People's Socialist Libyan Arab "Jamahiriya" (Government of the Masses). By 1981, a drop in the world oil market began to weaken Qaddafi's power and his efforts to radically alter Libya's economy failed. Domestic discontent began to emerge. There were even sporadic attacks by local opposition groups. These were met with mass arrests and executions.

Libya's important trade relationship with the United States deteriorated in the early 1980s, as the US government increasingly protested Qaddafi's support for terrorists. Trade restrictions and military skirmishes culminated in a US bombing raid on Tripoli and Benghazi in April 1986, aimed at eliminating Qaddafi for good. Several members of his family were killed or wounded but Qaddafi himself escaped injury. Libya's attempts to dominate neighboring Chad, especially the mineral-rich Aozou strip near the border, produced intermittent warfare during the 1970s and 80s. Both France and the United States supported Chad in these conflicts. In 1987 Chad handed Libya a humiliating and conclusive defeat, putting an end to further incursions. In spite of normalized relations between the two countries since 1988, the French continue to maintain a military presence in Chad.

Also in 1988, the bombing of a US airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland caused considerable outrage in Western capitals. Colonel Qaddafi refused to allow the two Libyan nationals accused of the crime to be tried in a Scottish court. This refusal led to a UN trade

embargo that went into effect in 1992. Most Mid-East and African leaders disagreed with the UN on the Lockerbie case. Egypt, for example, counseled compromise and urged that the case be tried in a neutral country. Nelson Mandela of South Africa demanded they be tried somewhere in Africa, claiming that a "fair" trial in the UK was impossible. Compromise won out in the end. Libya handed over the suspects to a Dutch court in 1999 and the embargo was lifted. They were subsequently convicted.

FOREIGN WEAPONS

EE-9 Cascavel, EE-11 Urutu - BR, OT-64 - CZ; Fiat 6614, 155mm Palmeria - IT; All other foreign weapons - RU

TABLES OF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT

LIBYAN FORCES: (CHAD) 1979-1988

Generation: II, Air Superiority Rating: 50, Class: Conscripts, Base Determination Factor: 20%

Mechanized Infantry Company: 3xTL2 Infantry(A)/OT-64 or EE-11
OR: 3xTL2 Infantry(A)/BMP-1 or 3xTL2 Infantry(A)/BTR-50
Tank Company: 3xT-55M or 3xT-62A or 3xT-72
Recon Company: 0-2xEE-9[R], 1-2xFiat 6614[R] or BRDM-2[R]

Motorized Battalion: 3xMotor Infantry Company, 1x120mm M43 Mortar(3)/Truck
Mechanized Battalion: 3xMechanized Infantry Company, 1x120mm M43 Mortar(3)/Truck
Tank Battalion: 3xTank Company, 1x122mm SAU122(3)
Artillery Battalion: 2x122mm SAU122(3), 1xSAU152(3)
OR: 3x155mm Palmeria(3)

Command Center: 1xTL2 Infantry(A) GHQ/BTR-50, 1xArtillery Battalion, 1xRecon Company, 1xZSU-23/4

Available Support Units: (One or more of these units or parts thereof, may appear in a particular action at your discretion.)
Anti-Aircraft Missile Battery: 1xSA-9 or SA-13
Rocket Battalion: 3x122mm BM21(12)
Heavy Artillery Battalion: 3x130mm M46(3)/Truck
Anti-Tank Company: 3xBRDM-2/AT-3 or BRDM-2/AT-5

Air Support: Su-22 and MiG-23 Fighters, Mi-24D, Mi-8, Alouette III, Super Frelon, and CH-46 Helicopters

Notes: 1) A Libyan "Battle Group" consists of a "Command Center" and between three and four Mechanized and/or Tank Battalions.
2) In "BTR-50" mechanized companies, each infantry stand may contain an attached AT-3 "Sagger" team (MP).
3) One infantry stand per mechanized company may contain an attached SA-7 team (MP).
4) The original Libyan force in Chad consisted of two tank and two mechanized battalions. Six additional battalions of various types, mostly infantry, were added in 1987.

TACTICAL NOTES

The war in Chad was a classic example of how a lightly armed, well disciplined, and motivated force can defeat a much larger and better-equipped force. The Libyans in any scenario should be handicapped by extremely low cohesion. Play balance will be provided by the Libyans enormous advantages in numbers and technology.

Libya is also one of those countries that lends itself to "What-if" situations. The American bombing in 1986 could have been a Marine landing instead. Relations between Libya and her neighbors Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria have often been bitter and dangerous. An Egyptian invasion of Libya in 1976 was only averted at the last moment! Libyan support for anti-government groups in Algeria has been ongoing. A mini-campaign pitting Libya against Algeria is not beyond the realm of possibility. When it comes to aggravating his neighbors, Qaddafi's talents are almost unequalled. Refer to the section on Chad for more scenario ideas.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Things are not going well for Libya lately. During 1998 and 1999 many army units were sent to support local militia in suppressing armed dissidents in Cyrenaica. Libyan Army doctrine is derived from the now defunct Soviet model. Tactics are based on political rhetoric rather than sound military principles. Consequently, Libyan troops tend to lose battles rather than win them. In addition, considerable disorder plagues the Libyan military. Most Libyan equipment appears to be unserviceable and the outlook for improvement looks pretty bleak. Though the country can still muster considerable numbers of tanks for military parades, this does not constitute an effective armored force.

A divisional structure, as such, no longer exists in the Libyan Army. Battalions are grouped together in temporary "Battle Groups". The fact that this policy failed in Chad does not deter Libyan planners, as the army's leadership seems to be suffering from a kind of intellectual "bankruptcy". Morale is poor. Qaddafi seems to have lost faith in his army and has placed great emphasis on preparing the average citizen to fight "guerilla" war to defeat the long anticipated American invasion. The fact that this invasion has been twenty-seven years in coming doesn't deter the government's enthusiasm for it.

The UN embargo produced by the Lockerbie dispute led to serious supply shortages for Libyan weapons. An attempt in 1998 by South Africa to set up an oil-for-arms deal which would provide Libya with parts for its Mirage fighters and brand new "Rooivalk" helicopters was discovered and had to be denied. With the lifting of the embargo in 1999, Russia stepped into the breach. Most of Libya's SAMs were supplied by the Soviet Union and are now obsolete. An agreement has been reached for Russia to supply Libya with SA-10D "Grumble" low-to-high altitude SAMs to replace them. The Libyans have also approached the Russians hoping to upgrade their MiG-21 and MiG-25 fighters. The Russians would like to sell them the new MiG-31 "Foxhound" as well.

Despite serious financial problems, Qaddafi continues to support terrorist groups. Several are listed below:

The Abu Nidal Organization - A PLO splinter group which includes "Black September" and the "Arab Revolutionary Council"
The ETA - The "Basque Fatherland and Liberty Group"
The IRA - The "Irish Republican Army" which Libya has given SA-7 AAGMs, AK-47s, and over two tons of the explosive "Sentex"
The Jihad Fund - A central "bank" for groups dedicated to overthrowing moderate or secular Arab governments
The New People's Army - A Filipino Communist group that enjoys kidnapping, hostage taking, and bombing attacks
The PLO - Specifically, the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" which has perfected the "suicide" bombing

In the final analysis, Qaddafi's time is running out. Libyan opposition groups grow bolder every year. By the end of the decade, the current dictatorship will probably be replaced with a more moderate regime. This regime will be faced with the need to replace practically its entire weapons inventory. Western companies would do well to move quickly to fill that need before the Russians do. The recent detente, begun when Libya divested itself of its nuclear development program, may go a long way toward this end.

2002 LIBYAN ARSENAL

Vehicles: 145xT-72, 280xT-62, & 210xT-54/55 Tanks, 740xBMP-1, 540xBTR-50/60, 100xOT-62/64, 118xEE-11, & 35xM113 APCs, 242xBRDM-2, 370xEE-9, 100xFiat 6616, 200xFiat 6614, and some AML-90 Scout Vehicles
AT Weapons: AT-3, AT-4 AT-5, & "Milan" ATGMs
Artillery: 360x130mm M46, 60x105mm M101, 245x122mm D-30 Towed Guns, 18x155mm M109, 158x155mm "Palmeria", & 55x152mm 2S3 (SP) Guns
Anti-Aircraft: 450x23mm, 30mm, & 57mm AAGs, SA-6/7/9 & 13 SAMs, Some "Crotale" launchers
SSMs: 70xScud-B, 48xFROG-7
Combat Aircraft: 54xMiG-25, 15xSu-24, 89xMiG-23, 40xSu-22, 42xMiG-21, 20xMirage F1
Helicopters: 4xAlouette III, 7xMi-8, 40xMi-24, 42xMi-4, 12xCH-46
Small Arms: 9mm Beretta M951, Makarov, Stechkin & 7.62mm Tokarev Pistols, 7.62mm FN FAL, Beretta BM59, AK-47, AKM, SKS, G3, & Vz/58 Rifles, 9mm Beretta M12, Sterling, & 7.65mm "Scorpion" Submachineguns, 7.62mm RPD, RPK, RP-46, FN MAG, & 12.7mm DShK Machineguns, 400xCarl Gustav and 2,300xRPG-7 ATGLs, 200x106mm M40 RcR

Notes: 1) An additional 250xT-54/55s are in storage.
2) Less than half the aircraft listed are operable. Several squadrons are at cadre strength and do no flying.
3) 16xMirage 5D may be in storage.

POINTS OF CONTACT

Ministry of Defense (Office of the Leader of the Revolution) - Tel: (+218 21) 482 10/14