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From: H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 30, 2011 9:02 PM
To: 'preines[redacted]
Cc: 'cheryl.mill[redacted] 'jake.sullivan[redacted] Huma Abedin
Subject: Re: WaPo

There are a few factual errors--biggest is that the 4-way call was w Juppe not Sarkozy. Did I talk for 90 minutes w HBJ? Can you review for other issues? I think it behooves us to let WaPo (and Joby) make corrections on line so credibility of piece not questioned.

----- Original Message -----
From: PIR [mailto:preines[redacted]
Sent: Sunday, October 30, 2011 08:27 PM
To: H
Cc: CDM <cheryl.mills[redacted]>; Jake Sullivan <jake.sullivan[redacted]; Huma Abedin
Subject: WaPo

Below is the front page of tomorrow's Washington Post. Ben Rhodes has already expressed to Jake and me serious unhappiness about the lack of credit given to the President in this story.

Clinton's key role in Libya conflict
By Joby Warrick
Washington Post
Sunday, Oct 30, 2011

TRIPOLI, Libya — At 5:45 p.m. on March 19, three hours before the official start of the air campaign over Libya, four French Rafale jet fighters streaked across the Mediterranean coastline to attack a column of tanks heading toward the rebel city of Benghazi. The jets quickly obliterated their targets—and in doing so nearly upended the international alliance coming to Benghazi's rescue.

France's head start on the air war infuriated Italy's prime minister, who accused Paris of upstaging NATO. Silvio Berlusconi warned darkly of cutting access to Italian air bases vital to the alliance's warplanes.

"It nearly broke up the coalition," said a European diplomat who had a front-row seat to the events and who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters between allies. Yet, the rift was quickly patched, thanks to a frenzied but largely unseen lobbying effort that kept the coalition from unraveling in its opening hours.

"That," the diplomat said, "was Hillary."

Seven months later, with longtime American nemesis Moammar Gaddafi dead and Libya's onetime rebels now in charge, the coalition air campaign has emerged as a foreign policy success for the Obama administration and its most famous Cabinet member, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Some Republicans derided the effort as "leading from behind" while many others questioned why President Obama was entangling the nation in another overseas military campaign that had little strategic urgency and scant public support. But with NATO operations likely ending this week, U.S. officials and key allies are offering a detailed new defense of the approach and Clinton's pivotal role — both within a divided Cabinet and a fragile, assembled-on-the-fly international alliance.

What emerges from these accounts is a picture of Clinton using her mixture of political pragmatism and tenacity to referee spats among NATO partners, secure crucial backing from Arab countries and tutor rebels on the fine points of message-management.

Clinton, in an interview, acknowledged "periods of anguish and buyer's remorse" during the seven months of the campaign. But she said, "We set into motion a policy that was on the right side of history, on the right side of our values, on the right side of our strategic interests in the region."

From skeptic to advocate

During the initial weeks of unrest in Libya, Clinton was among the White House officials clinging to fading hopes that Gaddafi might fall without any help from the West.

From the first armed resistance on Feb. 18 until March 9, the disorganized opposition movement appeared to be on a roll, taking control of Libyan cities from Benghazi to Brega and Misurata on the Mediterranean coast. But in a single, bloody week, Gaddafi loyalists turned rebel gains into a rout, crushing resistance in towns across Libya before marshaling forces for a final drive against Benghazi, the last opposition stronghold.

With Gaddafi threatening to slaughter Benghazi's population "like rats," the rebel leaders pleaded for Western intervention, including a no-fly zone. The appeal garnered support in Europe, particularly among French and British officials who began working on the text of a U.N. Security Council resolution that would authorize the use of military against the Libyan autocrat.

But the idea of a no-fly zone drew skepticism from within the Obama White House. Some officials, most notably then-Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, opposed military intervention. And Clinton, during two trips to Europe in early March, made clear that Washington was not eager to lead a politically risky military campaign against yet another Muslim country.

She was loath to see Gaddafi trouncing aspiring democrats in his country and menacing fledgling governments in neighboring Egypt and Tunisia. But Clinton told aides, who later described the administration's inner workings on the condition of anonymity, that the hard reality was that a no-fly zone, by itself, might make things worse.

"We were opposed to doing something symbolic — that was the worst of both worlds," said one of the aides. "We would have crossed the threshold [of intervention] without accomplishing anything."

Clinton had drawn up a list of conditions that included a formal request by Arab states for intervention. On March 12, the 22-nation Arab League did exactly that, voting to ask for U.N. approval of a military no-fly zone over Libya.

The next day, on March 13, Clinton traveled to Paris for a meeting with foreign ministers from the Group of 8 countries. In the marbled conference rooms of Paris's Westin Hotel, she sat down for the first time with Mahmoud Jibril, the interim leader of Libya's fledgling Transitional National Council. She also met privately with Gulf diplomats to gauge Arab willingness to send warplanes to enforce a possible no-fly zone. And she huddled with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, whose country's veto potentially could block any intervention effort at the United Nations.

"When she went to Paris, there were no instructions from the White House on whether to support strong action in Libya," said a senior State Department official. Yet, within three days, the official said, Clinton began to see a way forward.

"This was an opportunity for the United States to respond to an Arab request for help," the official said. "It would increase U.S. standing in the Arab world, and it would send an important signal for the Arab Spring movement."

By March 15, when Clinton spoke with President Obama by phone to brief him on the meetings, she had become a "strong advocate" for U.S. intervention, one administration official said. The president, who had been weighing arguments from a sharply divided Cabinet for several days, sided with his secretary of state.

Clinton was halfway across the Atlantic on March 17 when a resolution went before the U.N. Security Council authorizing a Libyan intervention with "all necessary means" — U.N. code for military force. From the plane, Clinton worked the phones while the administration's ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, met with counterparts to line up votes and to ensure that both Russia and China would withhold their vetoes.

The resolution passed, 10 to 0, with five countries abstaining.

Keeping alliance together

The French air attack that so angered the Italians two days later grew from French President Nicolas Sarkozy's desire to launch an early, symbolic strike before the official start of the campaign. The White House did not object — Sarkozy had been a key advocate of military intervention, and French leadership on Libya had boosted the president's popularity at home.

But the other allies were wary. France had floated the idea of a command structure distinct from NATO, that would include some Arabs while excluding Germany and other opponents of intervention. Italy and Turkey, meanwhile, insisted on NATO control and threatened to boycott any other arrangement. The early French attack deepened suspicions by the two countries that Sarkozy harbored "hidden agendas and different agendas," as Turkish President Abdullah Gul would later say.

With the alliance threatening to unravel, Clinton focused on damage control. She spent hours on the phone and in person with Berlusconi and Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, who eventually played crucial roles in providing air bases as staging grounds for attacks.

The details of the military command were ultimately decided in a four-way conference call between Clinton and Sarkozy, British Foreign Secretary William Hague and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

Yet even as that conflict cooled, another one was erupting.

Several Arab states, including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan, had agreed to supply warplanes and pilots to the coalition in a symbolic show of support by Muslim countries for military action against Libya.

But three days into the bombing campaign, the Arabs appeared to be backing away, concerned by the possibility of a backlash in their own countries and angered by U.S. criticism of the Saudi-led military intervention in Bahrain to put down an uprising there. By March 24, Qatar's four promised jets still had not yet made an appearance over Libya, and the United Arab Emirates and Jordan had announced that they would provide only humanitarian assistance.

In a bid to woo the Arabs back into the alliance, Clinton spoke for 90 minutes by phone with Sheik Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani, the Qatari foreign minister, while also making repeated calls to the UAE's Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and to Jordan's King Abdullah II.

"This is important to the United States, it's important to the president and it's important to me, personally," Clinton told Arab leaders, according to one of the State Department official.

On March 25, Qatari-flagged Mirage 2000 jets flew their first sorties over Libya, All three countries eventually would supply military aircraft and experienced pilots to the Libyan campaign.

Getting past stalemate

The NATO-led air campaign quickly pushed Gaddafi's forces from Benghazi. But by May, the alliance's planes were patrolling front lines that barely moved.

In Washington and in Europe, the word "stalemate" began to creep into opinion columns as lawmakers, skeptical of U.S. policy in Libya, began threatening to block funds for military operations there. Meanwhile, a cash crunch also loomed for the rebels, who were unable to sell oil and were legally blocked from tapping into Gaddafi's overseas bank accounts. By early July, they had run out of money for weapons, food and other critical supplies.

Clinton, ignoring the advice of the State Department's lawyers, convinced Obama to grant full diplomatic recognition to the rebels, a move that allowed the Libyans access to billions of dollars from Gaddafi's frozen accounts. At a meeting in Istanbul on July 15, she pressed 30 other Western and Arab governments to make the same declaration.

"She brought everyone over at once," said a Western diplomat who attended the Istanbul meeting.

Tripoli fell five weeks later, after a relatively small U.S. expenditure of $1 billion, and with no regular U.S. troops on the ground. In the air campaign, U.S. jets flew less than a third of the missions but supplied critical support in air refueling, surveillance and logistics for sorties flown by more than a dozen other nations.

Still, no hero's welcome

The political benefits to Clinton and Obama remain far from clear. To many Libyans and others in the Muslim world, the lasting impression from the campaign is that of a reluctant America, slow to intervene and happy to let others take the lead. While Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron were given heroes' welcomes during victory laps through Libya last month, Clinton was confronted during her recent Tripoli visit with questions about why the United States had not done more.

"Many people feel that the United States has taken a back seat," one student told her.

U.S. critics of the administration's policy say the administration's Libya policy, while ultimately successful, is emblematic of a slow and haphazard response to the Arab Spring uprisings.

"Earlier intervention might have prevented the conflict from ever reaching that dangerous precipice," said Michael Singh, a former senior director for Middle East affairs at the National Security Council under President George W. Bush."There is a difference between building an international consensus and following one."

Clinton acknowledged that history's verdict on the Libyan intervention was far from assured and said that NATO's formula for aiding a popular uprising against a dictatorship may not be easily applied elsewhere.

"We need to assess where we are, what we accomplished together, what the costs were," Clinton said. Meanwhile, she said, "we do have to be more agile and flexible in dealing with a lot of the challenges we face, and we should be unembarrassed about that."