

CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

Libya: Background and U.S. Relations

November 4, 2005

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Summary

The relationship between the United States and Libya has been strained and hostile for much of the last 35 years, but has recently shown signs of improvement. Following the Libyan government's December 2003 decision to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction and long range missile programs, a number of bilateral diplomatic exchanges have taken place, and the termination of U.S. economic sanctions on Libya has paved the way for a renewal of investment by U.S. oil, gas, and energy service firms in Libya's under-capitalized energy sector. Several visits to Libya by Bush Administration officials and Members of Congress in 2004 and 2005 have raised expectations of a formal reestablishment of normal relations between the U.S. and Libya in the near future, including the removal of the last remaining sanctions associated with Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Bilateral intelligence and counter-terrorism cooperation has contributed to a gradual U.S.-Libyan re-engagement on security matters since late 2001. Continuing U.S. concerns about Libya's relationship with some Palestinian terrorist groups and an alleged Libyan-sponsored assassination plot targeting Saudi monarch King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud thus far have delayed the rescission of Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. The designation remains the most significant obstacle to the full resumption of bilateral relations. Other issues of interest to the United States include Libyan political and economic reform efforts, steps to address long standing human rights concerns, and Libyan engagement with Arab and African states.

This report provides background information on Libyan history and U.S.-Libyan relations; profiles Libyan leader Muammar Al Qadhafi; discusses current political and economic reform efforts; and reviews current issues of potential congressional interest. It will be updated periodically to reflect important developments. For information about Libya see CRS Report RL32604, *Libya: Legislative Basis for U.S. Economic Sanctions*, by Dianne E. Rennack, and CRS Report RS21823, *Disarming Libya: Weapons of Mass Destruction*, by Sharon A. Squassoni and Andrew Feickert.

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Libya: Background and U.S. Relations

Recent Developments

On October 2, 2005, Libya announced the results of a second round of post-sanctions bidding for new oil exploration and production agreements. European and Asian companies won most of the licenses, with U.S.-based Exxon-Mobil joining first round U.S. winners Occidental Petroleum, Amerada Hess and ChevronTexaco.

On September 28, President Bush waived two Arms Export Control Act restrictions on the export of defense articles to Libya, which remains designated as a state sponsor of terrorism. The waiver will allow U.S. companies to possibly participate in Libya's efforts to destroy its abandoned chemical weapons stockpiles. The waiver also allows the refurbishment of eight C-130 planes purchased by Libya, but withheld for the last thirty years. The President did not indicate whether or when the aircraft might be delivered.

Following a September 2005 meeting with Libyan Foreign Minister Abd Al Rahman Shalgam, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that the United States is committed to broadening its relationship with Libya, but she stopped short of calling for the full normalization of U.S.-Libyan relations. In a nationally televised address on October 1, Libyan leader Muammar Al Qadhafi called for the establishment of "friendship with the U.S."

Officials from Libya and Saudi Arabia announced in September that the dispute between their governments concerning an alleged Libyan plot to assassinate then-Crown Prince and now King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has been resolved. U.S. State Department officials have indicated that the alleged assassination plot is a major factor in Libya's continuing designation as a state sponsor of terrorism and that Saudi officials' decision to reconcile with Libya may help alleviate some of the remaining U.S. concerns.

In September, Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi, the Libyan leader's son and president of the Qadhafi International Foundation for Charities, announced the establishment of a human rights hotline for Libyan citizens to report instances of unlawful detention or abuse by security officials. On October 9, the Libyan Supreme Court announced its decision to grant new trials to over 80 imprisoned Muslim Brotherhood activists. Both decisions were welcomed by international human rights organizations as positive developments.

Background and Recent History

The north African territory that now composes the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahirriya¹ has a long cultural history as a center of Phoenician, Carthaginian, Roman, Berber, and Arab civilizations. Modern Libya's distinct regions and tribally-influenced society create a complex political environment that is made up of diverse constituencies from northwestern Tripolitania, northeastern Cyrenaica, and the more remote southwestern Fezzan (see **Figure 1**). Significant economic and political changes have occurred since Libya became independent in 1951. These changes have been fueled by the country's emergence from Italian colonization, the discovery of vast oil and natural gas reserves, and the domination of political life by the authoritarian government of Muammar Al Qadhafi,² who overthrew the Libyan monarchy on September 1, 1969. The legacies of anti-Italian insurgency and World War II combat, international pressures associated with the Cold War, and complex relationships with Arab and African neighbors have all shaped the country's development. See Appendix A for a discussion of Libya's pre-Qadhafi history, other background information, and a list of historical resources.

Figure 1. Map of Libya



Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS. (K.Yancey 10/21/05).

¹ The Arabic word *jamahirriya* means “state of the masses” or “peoples’ authority” and was added to Libya’s official name in 1978 by Col. Muammar Qadhafi to reflect Libya’s nominally decentralized political system. The adjective ‘great’ was added in 1986.

² Multiple spellings of Muammar Al Qadhafi’s first and last names are used in the Western press. This report uses a phonetic spelling; others reflect varying pronunciations.

The Qadhafi Era

On September 1, 1969, a cabal of Libyan military officers led by army Captain Muammar Al Qadhafi seized important government institutions in the eastern city of Benghazi and abolished the Libyan monarchy. Facing negligible internal resistance, the leadership of the Movement, known as the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), established authority and announced that it would direct the activities of a new cabinet. The RCC also made statements affirming Libya's Arab and Islamic identity and its support for the Palestinian people. After renaming the country the Libyan Arab Republic, the RCC announced the promotion of Captain Qadhafi to Colonel and named him commander in chief of Libya's armed forces.³ Like Qadhafi, the other members of the RCC were pan-Arabist and socialist ideologues from rural and somewhat marginalized communities. The United States did not oppose the 1969 coup, as the RCC initially presented an anti-Soviet and reformist platform.

Colonel Qadhafi and the RCC focused intensely in their early years in power on taking steps to safeguard "national independence" and consolidate their rule through populist and nationalist political and economic programs. The members of the RCC were determined to secure the immediate and full withdrawal of British and U.S. forces from military bases in Libya, which occurred on March 28 and June 11, 1970, respectively. Italian expatriates were expelled and their assets were confiscated on October 7, 1970. All three dates subsequently were declared national holidays. The new government also pressured U.S. and other foreign oil companies to renegotiate oil production contracts and cede a larger share of production revenues. Some British and U.S. oil operations eventually were nationalized. In the early 1970s, the RCC gradually reversed its stance on its initially icy relationship with the Soviet Union and extended Libyan support to revolutionary, anti-Western, and anti-Israeli movements across Africa. These policies contributed to a rapid souring of U.S.-Libyan political relations, although economic relations, particularly U.S. oil purchases from Libya, remained steady.

The Green Book and Qadhafi's Ideology. Beginning in the early-1970s, Muammar Al Qadhafi and his regime carried out drastic and frequent reorganizations of Libyan political and economic life in line with his "Third Universal Theory." The theory, which blends pan-Arab, Islamic, and socialist values, is enshrined in Qadhafi's three volume *Green Book*. The redistribution of land and wealth, the allocation of fluctuating oil revenues, and a near total decentralization of political institutions reshaped Libya's social landscape in line with Qadhafi's principles. These trends also helped Qadhafi and his supporters maintain political control. Overseas, Qadhafi promoted his political and economic "Third International Theory" as an alternative to the capitalist and communist systems of the United States and the Soviet Union for the developing countries of the Third World. Qadhafi's confrontation with the United States and was both a catalyst and product of the Libyan government's violent and destabilizing activities abroad, Qadhafi's ideological fervor, and his regime's gradual drift into the Soviet sphere of influence.

³ Over time, Qadhafi stopped using his military title and identifying himself with a formal government position. Although he retains de facto control over Libya's affairs, he is now commonly referred to as the "Guide of the Revolution" or "Brother Leader."

Terrorism and Confrontation with the United States. In line with his ideological precepts, Muammar Al Qadhafi long justified Libyan backing for anti-colonial, separatist, and Islamist movements and terrorist groups around the world as legitimate support for parties seeking self determination. The United States and others categorically and continuously rejected Libya's policies as unacceptable sponsorship of illegitimate terrorism and subversive violence. In the 1970s and 1980s, U.S. officials cited evidence of training camps and other Libyan government support for a panoply of terrorist groups including the Abu Nidal organization, the Red Army Faction, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), and the Irish Republic Army. Libyan-sponsored bombings and assassinations also drew sharp international criticism, especially killings of Libyan expatriate dissidents and the bombings of Pan Am Flight 103 and UTA Flight 772 in the late 1980s. In the 1990s, Libyan-trained individuals led brutal rebel movements across Africa, including Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia.⁴

Qadhafi's Arab-Israeli Intransigence. The Arab-Israeli conflict was another particularly pointed source of tension between the United States and Qadhafi: Libya remained distinctly opposed to negotiation or reconciliation with Israel throughout the Cold War era and the 1990s, promoting armed struggle as the only viable means to end Israel's occupation of territory it captured from neighboring Arab states in 1967. At times, Qadhafi's position led to deep bilateral rifts between Libya and Egypt, particularly under Anwar Sadat, as well as confrontations with P.L.O. leader Yasir Arafat. Qadhafi and his security services provided support, training, and safe harbor for Palestinian terrorist groups until the late 1990s. After a temporary reconciliation with Arafat during the first Palestinian *intifada* in 1987, Qadhafi returned to voicing complete opposition to the Oslo peace process and called for Arab leaders to avoid further recognition of or negotiation with Israel.

In recent years, Qadhafi has maintained his opposition to Arab engagement with Israel in face of continued Israeli occupation and settlement activity, but he also has called for reconciliation between the Israeli and Palestinian people within a single state, which he proposes be called 'Isratine.' At a World Economic Forum meeting in Jordan in May 2005, Qadhafi's politically active son, Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi, stated that he had "no problem dealing and speaking with Israelis," which led some observers to speculate that Libya was preparing to change its position with regard to establishing normal relations with Israel. Libyan Foreign Ministry officials subsequently distanced themselves from the younger Al Qadhafi's statements and reaffirmed official Libyan support for a "one state" solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a 2005 interview, Libyan Foreign Minister Abd Al Rahman Shalqam denied that Qadhafi planned to visit Israel in the wake of Israel's unilateral

⁴ See Paul Richards, "War as Smoke and Mirrors: Sierra Leone 1991-2, 1994-5, 1995-6," *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 78, Issue 2, Spring 2005; Douglas Farah, *Blood from Stones*, Broadway Books, New York, 2004, pp.23-25; *The Economist*, "Foday Sankoh," Vol. 368, Aug., 9, 2003, p. 73; *Economist*, "Qaddafi Says Farewell, Arabia, and Sets His Sights on Africa," Vol. 351, Apr. 24, 1999; I. Abdullah and P. Muana, "The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone," in C. Clapham (ed.) *African Guerrillas*, London: James Currey, 1998, pp. 179-93; Scott Anderson, "The Makeover," *New York Times Magazine*, Jan. 19, 2003; and Douglas Farah, "Gaddafi 'Meddling' in Africa," *Washington Post*, Aug. 16, 2003.

disengagement from the Gaza Strip, and argued that the disengagement had not influenced Libya's position toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁵

International Isolation and Signs of Change. Following the imposition of U.N. sanctions in the aftermath of the Libyan-sponsored airliner bombings of the late 1980s, Libya entered a period of increasing international isolation. The compounded effects of a loss of oil revenue, restrictions on the travel of senior officials, an international air travel ban, and an arms embargo brought significant pressure on Qadhafi and his government. Signs of change began to emerge in 1999 when Libya agreed to pay compensation for the bombing of UTA Flight 772 and allow two intelligence agents to stand trial for the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. Qadhafi's offers of counterterrorism and intelligence cooperation following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and his late 2003 decision to dismantle Libya's weapons of mass destruction and long range missile development programs marked further steps toward new relationships with the United States and the international community. Qadhafi also has participated in peacemaking efforts in a number of African conflicts, including hosting and subsidizing U.N. World Food Program aid flights to Darfur, Sudan from Libyan territory. New oil production agreements and gradually improving political relations with the United States and a number of European and Asian countries have demonstrated the benefits of Libya's apparent new orientation (see below).

Current Issues in U.S.-Libyan Relations

The relationship between the United States and Libya has been confrontational for much of the last thirty-five years, but has shown signs of positive change since late 2003. Libyan government support for international terrorism, its regional intervention, and its now-abandoned pursuit of weapons of mass destruction proved to be persistent points of contention until recently. The Libyan government has long taken issue with what it regards as unbalanced U.S. military and financial support for Israel and what it describes as unwarranted U.S. intervention in the affairs of Arab states. In the past, these differences led to a number of confrontations and engagements between U.S. and Libyan armed forces, the imposition of economic and diplomatic sanctions by the United States, and some limited, covert efforts at regime change on the part of the United States.⁶

Today, Libya has begun a process of reconciliation and re-engagement with the United States after this long period of confrontation. The Libyan government's current policies of gradual economic liberalization and limited political reform are designed to improve economic conditions and the legitimacy of the Qadhafi regime

⁵ *Al-Hayah* (London), "Shalqam: Washington Will Lift Libya's Name From the List of Countries Sponsoring Terrorism Within Months," Sept. 24, 2005. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Document GMP20050924706004.

⁶ Joseph T. Stanik, *El Dorado Canyon: Reagan's Undeclared War with Qaddafi*, Naval Institute Press, 2003; Bernard Gwertzman, "Shultz Advocates U.S. Covert Programs to Depose Qaddafi," *New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1986; and Clifford Krauss, "Failed Anti-Qaddafi Effort Leaves U.S. Picking Up the Pieces," *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 1991.

in the eyes of the Libyan people and the international community. Current issues in U.S.-Libyan relations include negotiations regarding Libya's continued designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, Libyan progress on political and economic reform, human rights issues, and the final payment of the Pan Am Flight 103 settlement. A number of U.S. oil companies have successfully bid for reentry into Libya's energy market, and U.S. businesses have resumed trade relations with Libyan firms.

Reestablishing Normal Bilateral Relations

The Bush Administration has taken a series of gradual steps to reestablish normal relations between the United States and Libya since Libya's December 2003 decision to relinquish its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs.

- On February 11, 2004, the United States opened a two-person interest section at the Belgian embassy in Tripoli, which was expanded to a larger Liaison Office in June 2004. The White House announced several measures on February 26, 2004, including rescissions on bans on using U.S. passports to travel to or through Libya, and U.S. citizen expenditures in Libya.
- On September 20, 2004, President Bush issued Executive Order 13357 that ended most economic sanctions against Libya, allowed air flights between the two countries, permitted Libyan purchases of U.S.-built aircraft, and released approximately \$1 billion in Libyan assets that had been frozen in the United States. However, Libya remains on the state sponsors of terrorism list, which continues to restrict transfers of military equipment, weapons, or dual-use items, and the availability of foreign aid, if warranted.⁷
- On September 28, 2005, President Bush issued two waivers of Arms Export Control Act restrictions on the export of defense articles to Libya. The waivers allow U.S. companies to "possibly participate" in Libya's efforts to destroy its chemical weapons and precursor stockpiles, along with the refurbishment of eight C-130 transport planes purchased by Libya in the 1970s that have been withheld for the last thirty years.⁸ The President did not indicate whether or when the aircraft might be delivered.

Recent high-level contacts among Members of Congress, Bush Administration officials, and Libyan officials have fueled speculation that Libya may be removed from the state sponsors of terrorism list in the near future and that a full reestablishment of military, economic, and other relations could follow. During an

⁷ For a detailed discussion of remaining U.S. sanctions on Libya, see CRS Report RL32604, *Libya: Legislative Basis for U.S. Economic Sanctions*, by Dianne E. Rennack.

⁸ The C-130s remain in storage at Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Georgia. They reportedly remain militarily useful, provided that they receive necessary technology upgrades and repairs. *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Bound to the Ground: Libyan C-130s Still Parked 30 Years After Purchase," May 2, 2004.

August 2005 meeting in Libya with Senator Richard Lugar, Qadhafi reportedly extended an invitation for U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and President Bush to visit Libya.⁹ After a September 2005 meeting with Libyan Foreign Minister Abd Al Rahman Shalqam, Secretary Rice stated that the United States is committed to broadening its relationship with Libya following Libya's "historic decision" to disarm, but she stopped short of calling for the full normalization of U.S.-Libyan relations.¹⁰ On October 1, Qadhafi called in a nationally televised address for the establishment of "friendship with the U.S."¹¹ He also has urged other Arab governments to extend full counter-terrorism cooperation to the United States.

Post-9/11 Counter-terrorism Cooperation

Muammar Al Qadhafi immediately condemned the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks as "horrific and gruesome" and his government has taken steps to improve U.S.-Libyan counter-terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing since 2001. The Libyan government has long perceived Al Qaeda as a threat because members of Libya's Islamist opposition have been linked to Al Qaeda and other foreign jihadist organizations (see below). This has contributed to Libya's willingness to expand counter-terrorism cooperation with U.S. authorities. Qadhafi has characterized members of Al Qaeda as "heretics" in prominent public statements and has described his government's intelligence and counter-terrorism cooperation with the United States as "irrevocable." In June 2005, U.S. Undersecretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey traveled to Libya to encourage officials to incorporate counter-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering controls into their financial sector reform program.¹² U.S. officials reportedly hope to extend counter-terrorism assistance to Libya in the future under the framework of the interagency Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), which currently involves all of Libya's neighbors, except Sudan and Egypt.¹³

Libya has taken direct action to limit the activities of known Al Qaeda associates within its borders, including elements of its own Islamist opposition allied with Al Qaeda. In October 2004, Libya transferred the deputy commander of the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) Amari Saifi, also known as Abderrazak Al Para, to Algeria, where he was wanted on terrorism charges. Saifi had been in the custody of the rebel Chadian Movement for Democracy and Justice, with whom Qadhafi reportedly maintains a close relationship.

⁹ *Agence France Presse*, "Kadhafi Invites Bush to Libya," Aug. 21, 2005.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State, Secretary Condoleezza Rice's Remarks with Libyan Foreign Minister Abd al-Rahman Shalqam, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, Sept. 17, 2005.

¹¹ *Mail and Guardian*, "Libya Seeks 'Friendship' with U.S.," Oct. 1, 2005.

¹² *Reuters*, "As Ties Warm, U.S. Pushes Libya on Terror Financing," *Reuters*, July 13, 2005.

¹³ Ann Tyson, "U.S. Pushes Anti-Terrorism in Africa," *Washington Post*, July 26, 2005.

Compensation for Victims of Libyan-Sponsored Attacks

On December 21, 1988, a bomb exploded on Pan Am flight 103 en route from London to New York, killing all 244 passengers and 15 crew on board and another 11 people in the town of Lockerbie, Scotland. On November 14, 1991, the United States and Scotland indicted two Libyan intelligence agents for their alleged roles in the bombing: Abd Al Baset Ali Al Megrahi and Al Amin Khalifah Fhimah. Under a U.N.-negotiated agreement, Fhimah and Al Megrahi were tried on murder charges under Scottish law in The Hague beginning in 1999. Fhimah was acquitted and Al Megrahi was convicted: he is currently serving a life sentence in a Scottish prison. Some observers in the United Kingdom, including lead Scottish Lockerbie investigator Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, have recently questioned Al Megrahi's conviction and argued that the Lockerbie investigation should be reexamined.¹⁴

In August 2003, Libya accepted responsibility for the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 and agreed to a final settlement that calls for successive payments to the families of victims following the termination of U.N. and U.S. sanctions. As of October 2005, Libya has issued payments of \$4 million per victim following the termination of U.N. sanctions in September 2003 and a second payment of \$4 million to each victim following the termination of bilateral U.S. sanctions in September 2004. Libya is withholding a final payment of \$2 million in a third party escrow account until the United States removes Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. On April 21, 2004, Libya extended its unilaterally set deadline for U.S. action and payment to the victims' families to July 22, 2004. Libya extended the deadline a second time to September 22, 2004. Lawyers and U.S. negotiators secured a third extension to April 30, 2005; however, Libya has frozen the final round of \$2 million payments (worth an estimated \$500 million) and reasserted its demand for removal from the U.S. state sponsors of terrorism list.¹⁵ Compensation claims for U.S. victims of the 1986 bombing of the La Belle nightclub in Berlin¹⁶ and the 1989 Libyan-sponsored bombing of a French passenger aircraft¹⁷ are pending in U.S. courts. Libya has made payments to German and French victims for the bombings and has called for compensation to be paid by the United States to Libyan victims of

¹⁴ *Sunday Times* (London), "Focus: Was Justice Done?" Oct. 23, 2005; Magnus Linklater, "It's Time To Look Again at Lockerbie," *The Times* (London), Oct. 26, 2005.

¹⁵ *Associated Press*, "Libyan Central Bank Takes Back Last Batch of Compensation Money Due to Lockerbie Victims," Apr. 9, 2005.

¹⁶ Two U.S. servicemen, Sgt. Kenneth T. Ford and Sgt. James E. Goins, were killed in the bombing and 80 other U.S. servicemen and women were injured. Some were permanently disabled. See Robert Lee Beecham, et al., v. Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, 01 CIV 02243, District of Columbia Circuit.

¹⁷ On Sept. 19, 1989, a mid-air explosion killed 171 passengers and crew of the French airline UTA flight 772 over Niger in western Africa, including seven U.S. citizens. On Mar. 10, 1999, a French court found six Libyans guilty in absentia for bombing the DC-10 aircraft. Libya paid a total of \$33 million in compensation to the victim's families in July 1999. France re-negotiated the settlement in 2003 and received about \$1 million for each victim. See Robert L. Pugh, et al. v. The Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, et al., Civ. A. No. 02-2026, U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

the 1986 retaliatory U.S. air strikes on Libya, which killed a number of civilians, including Muammar Al Qadhafi's adopted infant daughter.

Libya's State Sponsor of Terrorism Designation

Outstanding Questions. Libya remains designated as a state sponsor of terrorism by the United States because of "outstanding questions over its residual contacts with some past terrorist clients"¹⁸ and U.S. concerns about alleged Libyan sponsorship of a 2003 plot to assassinate then-Crown Prince, and now King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism restricts any transfers of military equipment, weapons, or dual-use items from the United States and requires the executive branch to use its voice and vote to oppose loans and assistance to Libya by international financial institutions. Muammar Al Qadhafi has denounced and renounced terrorism publicly on several occasions since September 2001, and, in December 2003, he pledged to end his government's support for violent political movements around the world. The state sponsor designation remains the most significant obstacle to the resumption of full economic and military relations between the United States and Libya, although significant counter-terrorism cooperation and growing commercial ties between the two countries have contributed to a gradual re-engagement. Libya is a party to all 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, including the International Convention on the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

Libya's past support for Palestinian terrorists, its opposition to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and its history of support for various international terrorist and rebel groups make some U.S. officials skeptical about Libyan government assurances that it has renounced terrorism and sponsorship of violent non-state actors as foreign policy tools. Although the Libyan government expelled Abu Nidal Organization operatives in 1999 and has eliminated most of its direct relations with Palestinian terrorist groups, U.S. officials suspect that Libyan leaders may continue to maintain relationships with some violent groups that reject the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Libya's past provision of training, funding, and weaponry to numerous European, Asian, and African rebel and terrorist groups also remains of concern to some U.S. observers and officials.

In 2000, the U.S. government criticized Libya's decision to pay a sizeable ransom to kidnapers from the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines that secured the release of a number of international hostages. At the time, the Department of State argued that the ransom negotiations "served only to encourage further terrorism" and made southeast Asia, and the Philippines in particular, "far more dangerous for residents and travelers," including the American citizens who were subsequently kidnaped by the ASG. Some analysts considered the alleged ransom an elaborate Libyan attempt to continue providing financial support to the ASG. It is unclear if an alleged prior relationship between the Libyan government and ASG operatives may have facilitated the ransom negotiations or if any such relationship continues. Libyan soldiers participate in an international monitoring

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Libya," *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004*, Apr. 2005.

effort in support of a cease-fire agreement between Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) insurgents and the Philippine government on the island of Mindanao.¹⁹

Alleged Assassination Plot. In December 2003, Saudi authorities arrested a number of Libyan and Saudi nationals on charges of attempting to assassinate then-Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. Saudi Arabia swiftly recalled its ambassador from Tripoli and expelled the Libyan ambassador from Saudi Arabia in protest. In 2004, a U.S. citizen named Abdulrahman Alamoudi pled guilty to a charge of illegally traveling to Libya and engaging in banned commerce with the Libyan government. Mr. Alamoudi claimed that his travel and financial dealings were carried out in support of the plot to assassinate the Saudi leader. He was sentenced to 23 years in prison in October 2004. The United States has expressed “serious concerns” about the allegations and U.S. officials have investigated the reported plot and questioned the Libyan government on the issue.

In September 2005, officials from Libya and Saudi Arabia announced that the dispute between their governments surrounding the alleged assassination plot has been resolved. Muammar Al Qadhafi reportedly pledged not to support anti-Saudi groups during consultations with a group of Members of Congress in Tripoli in late July.²⁰ On August 8, 2005, following his recent succession to the Saudi Arabian throne, King Abdullah pardoned the Libyan agents being held in Saudi Arabia. A Saudi Arabian Ministry of Information spokesman credited the pardon to King Abdullah’s desire to mend the Saudi Arabian-Libyan diplomatic rift and to promote unity among Arab countries. The governments have announced plans to return their respective ambassadors, and Department of State personnel indicate that the royal pardon may contribute to an atmosphere where U.S. concerns about the allegations may be easier to assuage. However, the Bush Administration has reserved final judgment pending further consideration of the matter.²¹

The Return of U.S. Oil Companies

Following the lifting of U.S. sanctions in 2004, Occidental Petroleum and the so-called Oasis group, which consists of Amerada Hess, Marathon, and ConocoPhillips, have engaged in negotiations with Libyan officials regarding the full resumption of their production activities. The issuance of Executive Order 12543 in January 1986 forced the companies to abandon their Libyan operations.²² During the sanctions era, the companies’ holdings were managed by a subsidiary of the Libyan NOC and all revenue from the sale of oil produced from the concession areas accrued to the Libyan government. The NOC made some attempts to open the concession areas held in trust for the U.S. companies to foreign investment. A two-step process requires the review of the existing production agreements with the NOC and the

¹⁹ *Agence France Presse*, “Philippines Expects to Sign Peace Pact with Muslim Separatists Next Year,” Sept. 22, 2005.

²⁰ Sylvia A. Smith, “Tent Talk: Souder, Qadhafi Confer on Saudi Tensions,” *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, July 27, 2005.

²¹ Author consultation with Department of State personnel, Aug. 10, 2005.

²² *Petroleum Intelligence Weekly*, “U.S. Firms Push At Libya’s Door,” July 15, 2004.

ratification of new agreements by Libya's political leadership. Officials from the NOC and the Libyan government approved the terms of Occidental Petroleum's reentry as of July 1, 2005, paving the way for Occidental to resume operations in its old concession areas. The members of the Oasis group reportedly have reached an agreement with the NOC and are awaiting official approval of their re-entry.

Current Congressional Issues

Several Members of Congress have visited Libya since early 2004 and some Members have called for further U.S. engagement in response to Libya's decision to rid itself of its weapons of mass destruction.²³ After an August 2005 visit to Libya, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Chairman Lugar called Libya "an important partner for [the United States] on the war against terrorism," and indicated that he would "work constructively on the assumption that it's in our best interest to normalize the relationship, to get an embassy there, to get an ambassador." Representative Lantos has introduced a bill known as the "United States-Libya Relations Act of 2005" (H.R.1453) that calls for the dispatch of a charge d'affaires to Libya, the negotiation of an agreement by the end of 2005 for the establishment of a full U.S. embassy in Tripoli, and a number of cooperative security, economic, and cultural initiatives. The bill would authorize the inclusion of Libyan nationals and organizations in Fulbright exchanges and Middle East Partnership Initiative programs, in addition to providing trade and economic support to improve governance and development in Libya. The bill has been read and referred to the House Committee on Financial Services Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy, Trade, and Technology.

Other pending legislation in the 109th Congress would remove restrictions on commercial activity and U.S. assistance to Libya. Section 210 of the FY2006-2007 Senate Foreign Affairs Authorization Bill (S.600) would remove a prohibition under Section 406(c) of the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-399) on the awarding of certain federal contracts to entities conducting business in Libya. According to the Senate report (S. Report 109-35) on S.600, "deletion of section 406(c) will permit the Department to undertake activities such as refurbishing and maintaining the current U.S. liaison office in Tripoli." Section 207 of the House Foreign Affairs Authorization Bill (H.R.2601) also would repeal Section 406(c).

Section 507 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill (H.R.3057), as agreed to by a House-Senate conference committee, contains a prohibition on the provision of assistance or reparations to Libya, with the specific exception of the activities of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and direct loans, credits, insurance and guarantees from the Export-Import Bank or its agents (H. Rept. 109-265, November 2, 2005).

²³ Sylvia A. Smith, "Libya Wins Lugar, Souder's Praise," *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette*, Sept. 25, 2005.

Political and Economic Profile

Muammar Al Qadhafi: A Profile. Muammar Al Qadhafi was born in 1942 near the central coastal city of Sirte. His Arabized Berber family belongs to the relatively small Qadhafa tribe, and his upbringing was modest. As a young man Qadhafi identified strongly with Arab nationalist and socialist ideologies espoused by leaders such as Egypt's Gamel Abdel Nasser. Although he was excluded from the elite Cyrenaica Defense Forces on a tribal basis during the Libyan monarchy period (see Appendix A), Qadhafi was commissioned as a regular army captain following stints at the Libyan military academy in Benghazi and the United Kingdom's Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Following his return to Libya, he led the September 1, 1969 overthrow of the Libyan monarchy with a group of fellow officers. He was 27 years old.

Qadhafi has proven to be a controversial, complex, and contradictory political survivor during his long reign in Libya, in spite of numerous internal and external challenges to his rule. He has exercised nearly complete, if, at times, indirect political control over Libya over the last thirty-plus years by carefully balancing and manipulating complex patronage networks, traditional tribal structures, and byzantine layers of national, regional, and local governance. Libya's foreign and domestic policies are nominally based on his personal ideology. Qadhafi and his supporters have imposed his theories with realistic purpose and precision, not hesitating to crush coup attempts, assassinate dissidents abroad, or sponsor violent movements and terrorist attacks against Libya's perceived external enemies.

Personally, Qadhafi often is described as mercurial, charismatic, shrewd, and reclusive, with a personal devotion to preserving and promoting traditional values in Libyan society. He is married and has eight children: seven sons and one daughter. An April 1986 U.S. air strike in retaliation for a Libyan-sponsored anti-American bombing in Berlin hit one of his homes in Tripoli, killing his adopted infant daughter and hospitalizing members of his immediate family. The incident continues to be a source of personal anger and resentment for Qadhafi: he has preserved the bombed out ruins of the home in the military compound where it stood, and he remarked on the death of President Ronald Reagan in 2004 that the former U.S. president had died before he could be prosecuted for the "ugly crime that he committed in 1986 against the Libyan children."²⁴

Political Dynamics

Libya's often contradictory political dynamics are a product of competing interest groups seeking to influence policy within the confines of the country's authoritarian political system and amid Libya's emergence from international isolation. Elements of Muammar Al Qadhafi's ideology permeate political discourse on many security and foreign policy issues, while in other cases, such as economic reform, new frameworks are being embraced to meet society's current and changing

²⁴ Khaled El-Deeb, "Gadhafi: Regrets Reagan Died Before Being Tried for 1986 Air Strikes on Libya," *Associated Press*, June 6, 2004.

needs. The legacies of colonial occupation and Libya's struggle for independence continue to influence Libyan politics; rhetorical references to preserving sovereignty and resistance to foreign domination are common in political statements. Most Libyans also accept a prominent role for Islamic tradition in public life: Islam is the official religion and the Quran is the basis for the country's law and its "social code."

Tribal relationships remain important, particularly with regard to the distribution of leadership roles in government ministries and in political-military relations. Tribal loyalties remain strong within and between branches of the armed services, and members of Qadhafi's tribe, the Qadhafa, hold many high ranking government positions, including key positions in the air force. Members of larger, rival tribes, such as the Warfalla, have opposed the regime on grounds of tribal discrimination. Some Libyan military and security officials staged limited, unsuccessful coup attempts against Qadhafi in 1993 and 1996 based in part on tribal and familial rivalries. The Qadhafi government has performed periodic reassignments and purges of the officer corps to limit the likelihood of organized opposition reemerging from within the military. However, these political considerations have affected the military's preparedness and war fighting capability.

Political parties and all opposition groups are banned in Libya under Law number 71 of 1972. Formal political pluralism is frowned upon by many members of the ruling elite, even as an increasing number of regime figures advocate for greater popular participation in existing government institutions. Opposition groups, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood, appear to have shifted their political strategies toward gradual attempts to influence national policy making in contrast to others' confrontational efforts to change the makeup of the regime. Key figures in Libyan politics include Muammar Al Qadhafi's son Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi,²⁵ General People's Committee Secretary Shokri Ghanem, and prominent members of the security establishment, including intelligence chief Musa Kusa and army leader and original RCC member Abu Bakr Younis Jaber.

Government Structure

Libya has a unique political system composed of nominally decentralized and participatory levels of government. Muammar Al Qadhafi and his closest supporters exercise final authority over domestic and foreign policies by means of their control of the implementation mechanisms of the national government — the sizeable military and security apparatus and a handful of powerful ministries. Qadhafi's ideological emphasis on "the authority of the people" is the stated basis for the operation of Libya's multiple levels of government. Although participation in these institutions is mostly open and political leaders routinely encourage citizens to take part in their deliberations, most external observers regard Libya's political system as authoritarian and undemocratic. The U.S. State Department's annual human rights reports document several ongoing restrictions on political life and human rights in Libya.

²⁵ For a detailed profile of Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi and a discussion of questions about the possibility of his succeeding his father, see Yehudit Ronen, "Libya's Rising Star: Said Al-Islam and Succession," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XII, No. 3, Fall 2005, pp. 136-44.

The “Authority of the People”. A hierarchy of “people’s congresses” make up Libya’s government and serve as venues for the exercise of “popular authority” as defined by Muammar Al Qadhafi’s ideology. At the local level, citizens meet in Basic People’s Congresses to appoint representatives to regional and ultimately the national General People’s Congress. Participation in the basic congresses is open to all Libyan citizens, although participation rates are notoriously low and Qadhafi regularly makes public statements expressing his disappointment with participation levels and urging broader popular involvement in public affairs. At the March 1, 2000, session of the General Peoples’ Congress, Qadhafi abolished the positions of 12 General People’s Committee (cabinet-equivalent) secretaries and reassigned their duties to provincial committees. Secretariats of foreign affairs, justice, public security, and finance remain under the authority of the centralized General People’s Committee, which is led by Secretary (prime minister-equivalent) Shokri Ghanem. Some experts have argued that the further decentralization was designed to deflect popular criticism from the central government and further dilute political opposition within the country.

Opposition Groups

The government has dealt harshly with opposition leaders and groups over the last three decades, establishing special “people’s courts” and “revolutionary committees” to enforce ideological and political discipline and to punish violators and dissidents. Abroad, Libyan intelligence personnel have monitored, harassed, and, in some cases, assassinated expatriate dissidents, some of whom were referred to as “stray dogs.” Libya’s myriad opposition movements can be categorized broadly as Islamist, royalist, or democratic in orientation. However, their activities and effectiveness have been largely limited by disorganization, rivalry, and ideological differences. New efforts to coordinate opposition activities have begun in response to Libya’s reintegration to the international community and the emergence of a broader political reform debate in the Arab world. However, most observers do not regard any of Libya’s current opposition groups as a serious threat or alternative to the current government.

Exiles. In the past, government officials and intelligence operatives have monitored and taken violent action against expatriate opposition groups and leaders, including in Europe and the United States. Clandestine opposition groups also have carried out assassinations and attacks against Libyan government officials abroad. Opposition groups in exile include the National Alliance, the Libyan National Movement (LNM), the Libyan Movement for Change and Reform, the Islamist Rally, the National Libyan Salvation Front (NLSF), and the Republican Rally for Democracy and Justice. A royalist contingent based on the claim to the throne by Mohammed Al Sanusi, the grandson of the former king, is based in London. These groups and others held an opposition conference in July 2005 in London and issued a “national accord,” calling for the removal of Qadhafi from power and the establishment of a transitional government.²⁶ In a September 2005 interview, Foreign

²⁶ May Youssef, Anti-Gaddafists Rally in London, *Al Ahram Weekly (Cairo)*, No. 749, June 30 - July 6, 2005; *Al Jazeera (Doha)*, “Opposition Plans to Oust Al Qadhafi,” June 25, 2005;

Minister Abd Al Rahman Shalqam characterized some of the regime's expatriate opponents as individuals who fled the country after committing economic crimes or collaborating with foreign intelligence services. He then invited any expatriate dissidents who had not committed crimes to return to Libya.²⁷ In August 2005, the government announced the return of 787 exiles who agreed to reconcile with the Qadhafi regime.²⁸

The Muslim Brotherhood. Like other political organizations and opposition groups, the Muslim Brotherhood is banned in Libya under law number 71 of 1972. Since the late 1940s, when members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood first entered Libya following a crackdown on their activities, the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood has existed as a semi-official organization. Hundreds of Brotherhood members and activists were jailed in 1973, although the Brotherhood eventually reemerged and operated as a clandestine organization for much of the following two decades. In 1998, a second round of mass arrests took place, and approximately 150 Brotherhood leaders and members were arrested. Several reportedly died in custody, and, following trials in 2001 and 2002, two prominent Brotherhood leaders were sentenced to death and over 70 were sentenced to life in prison. The current controller general of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, Suleiman Abdel Qadir, describes the Brotherhood's current objectives as peaceful and policy focused, with calls for the cancellation of laws restricting political rights.²⁹

Recently, Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi has reached out to the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood by characterizing the organization as nonviolent and non-seditious and signaling that imprisoned Brotherhood members will be released in the near future. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood were conspicuously absent from the July 2005 Libyan opposition conference in London, having declared their disagreement with efforts to overturn the current Libyan government. Some conference participants alleged that the Brotherhood had reached an agreement with the Libyan government to refrain from attending the conference in order to secure the release of its leaders from prison. Muslim Brotherhood officials have denied the claim. Press reports from September 2005 referred to Libyan plans to release 130 Islamist prisoners, although Islamists were not among the over 1,600 prisoners released in conjunction with the celebration of the 36th anniversary of the Libyan revolution on September 1, 2005.³⁰ On October 9, 2005, Libyan authorities announced that 86 imprisoned Muslim Brotherhood activists would receive new trials.

Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) is a violent Islamist movement opposed to the Qadhafi government

Middle East Mirror, "Libya's Fractured Opposition," July 29, 2005.

²⁷ "Libya's Shalqam on Ties With US, S. Arabia, Opposition," FBIS Document GMP20050924512001.

²⁸ *UPI*, "Libya Says Hundreds Return From Exile," Aug. 20, 2005.

²⁹ "Al Jazirah TV Interviews Libyan Muslim Brotherhood Leader on Current Situation," Aug. 3, 2005. FBIS Document GMP20050803550006.

³⁰ Khaled El Deeb, "Libya Pardons More Than 1,600 Criminals in Prison to Celebrate Gadhafi Coup," *Associated Press*, Sept. 2, 2005.

and allied with Al Qaeda and other international jihadist groups. According to the Department of State, the LIFG has attempted to assassinate Qadhafi, most recently in 1996, and may have participated in the planning of the May 2003 suicide bombings in Casablanca, Morocco.³¹ The United States froze the LIFG's U.S. assets under Executive Order 13224 in September 2001, and formally designated the LIFG as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in December 2004. Some observers have characterized the designation as a gesture of solidarity with Libya and have argued that the ability and willingness of the LIFG to mount terror attacks in Libya may be limited. Others claim that LIFG fighters have allied themselves with other violent Islamist groups operating in the trans-Sahara region, and cite evidence of Libyan fighters joining the Iraqi insurgency as an indication of ongoing Islamist militancy in Libya and a harbinger of a possible increase in violence associated with fighters returning from Iraq.³² Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi has announced plans to release some jailed members of the LIFG and other violent Islamist groups from prison, following their renunciation of violence and pledge to participate in society peacefully.³³

Political Reform and Human Rights

The authoritarian Libyan government's poor human rights record has been documented by world governments and international human rights monitors for much of the last 35 years. Annual reports on political and human rights conditions from the U.S. State Department and international groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have catalogued a broad range of recurring abuses including arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, torture, a general ban on political opposition, and official limitations on public speech, assembly, and press activity.³⁴ Since 2003, Libyan political figures, including Muammar Al Qadhafi and his son Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi, have made a series of public statements and policy announcements in an effort to repair Libya's reputation with regard to human rights practices. Although few tangible steps have been taken, Libyan authorities report that legal reforms are under way that may improve the protections and rights afforded to citizens. Judicial entities associated with human rights abuses and political control in the past, such as "revolutionary courts" and "people's courts," also reportedly have been dismantled. As a result, some observers have expressed cautious optimism that political, social, and religious freedom may be improving in Libya. Others continue to warn that such reforms may be merely cosmetic and meant to support the government's efforts to improve its domestic legitimacy and international standing.

³¹ U.S. Department of State, "Libya," *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004*, Apr. 2005.

³² Alison Pargeter, "Militant Groups Pose Security Challenge for Libyan Regime," *Janes Intelligence Review*, Vol. 17, No. 8, Aug. 2005, pp. 16-19.

³³ "Libyan Leader's Son on Call to Reopen Human Rights Files," Aug. 20, 2005. FBIS Document GMP20050820537003.

³⁴ The latest reports on human rights conditions in Libya are available in the U.S. Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Libya (Feb. 28, 2005) and from Amnesty International [<http://web.amnesty.org/library/eng-lby/index>], and Human Rights Watch [<http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=mideast&c=libya>].

Human Rights Monitoring. The Libyan government has not permitted the establishment of independent human rights organizations, but recently invited international human rights groups Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to Libya for the first time in 15 years. In late 2004 and early 2005, representatives from both organizations toured various security facilities and prisons and met with selected imprisoned dissidents. Recently, Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi has supported a pro-human rights agenda and has created an official human rights monitoring body under the auspices of the Qadhafi International Foundation for Charitable Associations. The foundation's Human Rights Society operates a national hotline for Libyans to report cases of unlawful detention, seizure of property or assets, and death or injury at the hands of security personnel.³⁵ Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi also has stated that the government intends to review all reported cases of human rights abuses and property crimes and to compensate victims as part of a national reconciliation program.

Legal and Institutional Reform. Libyan law prohibits the activities of all political opposition groups and restricts the free exercise of speech and the press.³⁶ Since Qadhafi's 1969 coup, little legal recourse has been available to citizens accused of political crimes. Nevertheless, officials recently have announced plans to embark upon a full review of the country's Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure to eliminate restrictive laws regarding political activity. New draft laws are scheduled to be submitted to the General People's Congress for consideration and approval during late 2005 or early 2006.³⁷ Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi also has called for a constitution to clarify the power of different legislative, executive, and judicial institutions in Libya and has endorsed ongoing legal reforms as a means to "provide a free environment that is suitable for a normal political life."³⁸

In support of these efforts, some institutional changes have been instituted to improve political and human rights conditions. In March 2004, the General People's Committee Secretariat of Justice and Public Security was split into two separate secretariats in an effort to establish greater judicial independence. In January 2005, the General People's Congress approved a law abolishing judicial institutions known as "people's courts" and "revolutionary courts" that, until recently, tried suspected regime opponents, sometimes in secret. International human rights organizations welcomed the abolition of the people's court system as an "important step" and urged

³⁵ Brian Whitaker, "Libya: Gadafy's Son Sets Up Human Rights Hotline," *The Guardian* (London), Sept. 17, 2005.

³⁶ According to the U.S. State Department, Libyan law provides for freedom of speech "within the limits of public interest and principles of the Revolution." In practice, criticism of the government and Qadhafi are restricted and often punished. By law, print and broadcast media in Libya are owned and operated by government authorities. Satellite and Internet access are limited and partially censored.

³⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Libya: Reforms Welcome, But Concerns Remain," May 23, 2005. Available at [<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/05/23/libya10983.htm>].

³⁸ "Libyan Leader's Son on Call to Reopen Human Rights Files," *Al-Jazirah* (Qatar) interview with Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi, Aug. 20, 2005. FBIS Document GMP20050820537003.

Libyan authorities to grant new trials to prisoners convicted by the courts, including several who were convicted in late 2004.

Bulgarian Nurses. An ongoing legal case has powerful implications for revitalized commercial and political relationships between Libya, the United States, and the member states of the European Union. On May 6, 2004, a Libyan court found five Bulgarian female nurses and one Palestinian male doctor guilty of infecting 426 Libyan children with AIDS. The six were sentenced to death by firing squad. The decision also sentenced one Bulgarian male doctor to four years for black market currency violations and acquitted nine Libyan hospital officials of charges linked to the AIDS infections. The Bulgarians and the Palestinian were arrested in 1999 on charges that they used the children in an AIDS treatment experiment. A French doctor testified at the trial that the children had been infected in 1997, one year before the Bulgarians and the Palestinian arrived in Libya. In May 2005, a Libyan court acquitted nine Libyan policemen and a doctor charged with torturing the five Bulgarians and a Palestinian to gain their confessions for allegedly infecting a number of Libyan children with HIV. A separate Libyan court delayed final decision on an appeal of the nurses' and doctor's verdict until November 15, 2005. A hearing on a second civil damages suit was postponed until December 17, 2005.

In August 2005, Libya's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Mohammed Al Zaway, called on the Bulgarian government to enter into negotiations with the families of the infected children over *diya*, a victim payment and conflict resolution scheme outlined in Islamic law and commonly referred to as "blood money." Bulgarian officials rejected the possibility of any negotiation and maintained the nurses' innocence. Bulgarian officials have requested assistance from the United States, the European Union, and the World Health Organization in securing the nurses' release. Bulgaria is currently a candidate for EU membership, and EU officials support Bulgaria's claims in the case. Members of Congress and U.S. officials frequently raise the subject with their Libyan interlocutors. During a joint press appearance in Washington with Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov on October 17, 2005, President Bush stated that, "there should be no confusion in the Libyan government's mind, that those nurses should be, not only spared their life, but out of prison, and we'll continue to make that message perfectly clear."³⁹

Energy and the Libyan Economy

Until the discovery of oil in 1959, Libya's economic viability was seriously questioned by many outside observers. Foreign aid and subsidies largely supported the national budget, until the introduction of massive amounts of oil revenue transformed the country's economy and social fabric. Following the September 1, 1969 military coup, Qadhafi and his government restructured Libya's economy along socialist lines, placing a heavy emphasis on national management of industry and resource allocation. However, the economy remained highly dependent on oil revenue and thus highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices.⁴⁰ Recently, the

³⁹ *Reuters*, "Bush Urges Libya to Free Condemned Bulgarian Nurses," Oct. 17, 2005.

⁴⁰ See Dirk Vandewalle, *Libya Since Independence*, Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, 1998.

government has announced its intention to reverse state ownership trends associated with the country's long experiment with socialism. Economic diversification and resource management remain challenges for the government and private sector as they seek to revive the economy and capitalize on interest from foreign investors.

Oil revenue has been the lifeblood of the Libyan economy and government since exports began in 1961, accounting for 95% of Libya's annual foreign currency earnings and 75% of annual government revenue in recent years.⁴¹ Since 1998, rising oil prices have led to a tripling in Libyan oil revenue, reaching \$18.1 billion in 2004 and projected to reach \$19.4 billion in 2005. The increase has spurred corresponding growth in the economy. Libyan leader Muammar Al Qadhafi stated recently that Libyans are "very happy" with the current price level in the global oil market, although he has underlined the importance of creating alternative sources of revenue and economic growth in recent public statements.⁴²

Oil Reserves and Production Capacity. Libya's proven oil reserves are estimated at 39 billion barrels (ninth largest in the world). Libyan officials estimate that over 60% of the country has yet to be surveyed for oil and gas deposits, which could hold an additional 76 billion barrels of oil.⁴³ The Libyan National Oil Company (NOC) manages oil production activity and negotiates exploration and production agreements with foreign companies. Oil exploration and production are carried out on the basis of a 1955 oil law, and Libyan authorities reportedly are drafting a new law to govern production activities and reform the foreign investment approval process. Foreign investment is regulated through exploration and production agreements negotiated by foreign companies and the NOC. Most of Libya's oil is exported to Italy, Germany, France, and Spain. However, following the resumption of crude oil exports to the United States in June 2004, oil shipments to U.S. refiners have increased, totaling 6.7 million barrels by the end of 2004.⁴⁴

Until recently, Libyan oil production had steadily declined from its peak of 3.3 million barrels per day (b/d) in 1970 due to the deterioration of production equipment and infrastructure related to strict investment controls and international sanctions. Libya currently produces 1.7 million barrels per day (b/d), which officials have stated is currently the sector's maximum capacity. Since the termination of U.N. and U.S. sanctions in 2003 and 2004, Libya has sought foreign investment to rehabilitate and expand its oil production capacity and expects \$11 billion in oil production related investment from 2005 to 2015. Current government production targets are 3 million

⁴¹ U.S. Energy Information Admin. (EIA), *Libya Country Analysis Brief*, Feb. 2005.

⁴² *Tripoli Great Jamahiriya TV*, "Libyan Leader Says 'Problems Abroad' Solved," Sept. 19, 2005. FBIS Doc. GMP20050919710040. *Reuters*, "Libya Very Happy With High Oil Prices - Gaddafi," July 4, 2005.

⁴³ Tarek Hassan-Beck, Libyan National Oil Company in *International Oil Daily*, "Libya Targets 'Huge Backlog' of Field Work in Post-Sanctions Push," Sept. 30, 2005.

⁴⁴ EIA., *Petroleum Supply Annual 2004, Volume 1*, June 2005.

b/d by 2011 and 3.6 million b/d by 2019.⁴⁵ Oil Minister Fathi Bin Shatwan has indicated that he expects Libya's production capacity to increase 18% by 2006.⁴⁶

New Exploration and Production Sharing Agreements. In addition to negotiating the return of U.S. oil companies to their former production areas (see below), Libyan officials are presiding over a bidding process for new exploration and production sharing agreements. Known as "EPSA IV," the fourth round of foreign agreement bidding since the process began in 1979 is opening large areas of onshore and offshore Libyan territory to new oil and gas exploration and production. In January 2005, Libyan officials announced the results for the first fifteen EPSA-IV exploration blocks, which cover an area of 51,000 square miles. Of the 63 international firms that were approved by Libyan authorities and submitted bids, U.S. firms won exploration licenses for 11 of the 15 blocks, whether as sole producers or as members of consortia. Occidental Petroleum, which also is negotiating a return to its former concessions (see below), led the U.S. companies with nine successful bids, and Amerada Hess and Chevron Texaco also secured new licenses. Representatives from Occidental Petroleum have stated that the company expects to begin exploratory drilling in its new license areas early next year.

Winners of the second batch of EPSA IV bids were announced on October 2, 2005. European and Asian firms received most of the licenses, and Exxon-Mobil was the sole U.S. license recipient. Two additional bidding rounds are scheduled to be held in 2006. Some oil and gas market analysts have speculated that the approval of the majority of production licenses for U.S. companies in the first EPSA-IV round may have been intended as an economic reward to the United States for agreeing to lift its bilateral sanctions against Libya. Others have argued that U.S. firms were successful because of their willingness to agree to production share terms that heavily favored the Libyan government and agreed to pay large signing bonuses. European and Asian oil companies have expressed strong interest in participating in new Libyan ventures and are expected to submit competitive bids in the upcoming rounds.

Natural Gas. Libya's proven natural gas reserves are estimated to be 52 trillion cubic feet, although, like the country's oil reserves, Libya's gas holdings may be significantly higher given the generally under-explored status of Libyan territory. As with oil production, the development of natural gas production and export capacity has been limited by restrictive investment policies and international sanctions. Nevertheless, Libya has been able to use natural gas for some domestic power generation and for limited exports to some European countries. Shell recently reached an agreement with Libyan authorities to explore for natural gas deposits and to upgrade Libya's aging liquefied natural gas plant at Marsa Al Brega.⁴⁷ Libyan authorities also are reportedly pursuing pipeline agreements with neighboring North African states to improve export access to European markets.

⁴⁵ Interview with Tarek Hassan-Beck, *International Oil Daily*, Sept. 30, 2005.

⁴⁶ *Dow Jones Intl.*, "Current Libya Oil Output At Maximum 1.7M B/D," June 13, 2005.

⁴⁷ *WWP Report on Oil, Gas & Petrochemicals*, "Libya: Multi-billion Dollar Joint Venture Agreement to Modernize Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Plant," June 1, 2005.

Military Profile and WMD Disarmament

The Libyan Military

Structure, Training, and Equipment. Libya's mostly conscripted military forces are small relative to the large amount of weaponry at their disposal (see **Table 1**). Most outside military analysts regard the training and leadership of Libyan forces as poor and identify a lack of combined arms and joint service planning as factors that limit their overall effectiveness. The Qadhafi government historically has made the acquisition of weapons and equipment a higher priority than training or creating high-quality military support infrastructure.

Table 1. Libyan Military Personnel

Service	Personnel
Army	45,000
Air Force	23,000
Navy	8,000
Revolutionary Guard Corps	3,000
Reserve Militia	40,000
Total	119,000

Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2004-2005*; Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Military Balance in the Middle East*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004; and Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, "Libya," *Middle East Military Balance*, Apr. 10, 2005.

Libya's army, navy, and air forces are equipped with a broad range of aging Soviet and Eastern Bloc equipment, although the country's poorly maintained inventories also include some U.S. and western European arms, including French Mirage fighters and U.S. C-130 transports.⁴⁸ Libya's exorbitant military spending in the late 1970s and early 1980s yielded an unmanageable crop of diverse weapon systems from various sources and manufacturers. Purchases declined significantly during the 1990s because of international sanctions, which limited the revenue available for defense spending. Libya's current military leadership presides over a largely stored and surplus catalogue of weaponry with poor maintenance records.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Facts on File World News Digest*, "U.S. Bars Libya Planes, Training," Sept. 20, 1975; and *Washington Post*, "Libya's Qaddafi Praises Carter, Urges Closer Ties," June 13, 1977. In 2004, Libya sold 40 of its aging Mirage fighters to Pakistan.

⁴⁹ Senior Middle East security analyst Anthony Cordesman has described Libya as "the world's largest military parking lot." For a more detailed profile of the Libyan military, see Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Military Balance in the Middle East*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 15, 2004, pp. 79-85.

The military also lacks sufficient numbers of trained personnel to operate the military equipment currently in its possession.

Arms Sales. The subject of renewed arms sales to Libya remains a sensitive subject in the United States and some European countries whose citizens were killed in Libyan sponsored terrorist attacks during the 1980s. The European Union lifted its arms embargo against Libya in October 2004. The United States maintains its arms embargo as a result of Libya's continuing designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. Qadhafi reportedly has expressed interest in procuring U.S., European, and Russian weapon systems. Libya recently purchased transport aircraft from Ukraine, and Ukrainian officials reportedly have expressed interest in providing maintenance and upgrades for Libya's large inventory of Soviet-era tanks and armored vehicles. French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie visited Libya in February 2005 and discussed plans for French firms to repair military equipment previously sold to Libya. The possibility of France selling sophisticated fighter aircraft and helicopters to Libya reportedly also was discussed.⁵⁰

WMD Programs and Disarmament⁵¹

Nuclear, Chemical, and Ballistic Missile Programs. Despite Libya's membership in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Libyan leader Muammar Al Qadhafi made several efforts to acquire nuclear weapons related technology assistance, beginning in the early 1970s. The most renowned was his reported unsuccessful request for a working nuclear weapon from China in the 1970s. Other unsuccessful attempts to acquire nuclear energy technology useful to the development of nuclear weapons were subsequently made through contacts with the Soviet Union, the United States, France, India, Pakistan, Japan, and Argentina.⁵² Nonetheless, most experts agree that Libya never had a dedicated nuclear weapons program. Over the next 25 years, Qadhafi made several public statements in which he argued that Arab states were compelled to develop their own nuclear weapons capability in response to Israel's development of nuclear weapons.⁵³ Libya

⁵⁰ *AFP*, "French Defence Minister Holds Talks in Libya," Feb. 5, 2005; Andrew Borowiec, "Paris Strengthens Military Ties with Libya," *Washington Times*, Feb. 17, 2005.

⁵¹ For a detailed discussion of Libya's WMD programs and disarmament see CRS Report RS21823, *Disarming Libya: Weapons of Mass Destruction*, by Sharon A. Squassoni and Andrew Feickert.

⁵² John K. Cooley, "Qaddafi's Great Aim for Libya is a Nuclear Capability of its Own," *Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 12, 1980; *New York Times*, "Nuclear Energy Aide And Foreign Adviser Appointed in Tripoli," Jan. 8, 1981; Joshua Sinai, "Libya's Pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Nonproliferation Review*, Spring/Summer 1997, pp. 92-100; and *Associated Press*, "Japan Company Sold Atomic Plant to Libya," Mar. 12, 2004.

⁵³ In 1987, for example, Al Qadhafi said that, "Now that the Israelis possess the atomic weapon, the Arabs have nothing before them except to work day and night to possess the atomic weapon in order to defend their existence." *Reuters*, "Gaddafi Urges Arabs to Develop Nuclear Weapons," September 2, 1987. See also *San Francisco Chronicle* "Khadafy Wants Arab A-Bombs," June 23, 1987; and *Agence France-Presse*, "Libya Urges Arabs to Get Nuclear Arms," January 27, 1996. Qadhafi made similar remarks in a March 2002 interview: "We demanded the dismantling of the weapons of mass destruction that the

established a small nuclear research reactor at Tajura in 1979 with Soviet assistance, and entered into several rounds of negotiations with Soviet and French authorities for the construction of large nuclear power facilities that were never concluded.

According to several press accounts, Libyan officials reached an agreement with Pakistani nuclear scientist Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan in 1997 for Khan and his illicit proliferation network to provide the Libyan government with a nuclear weapons design and the uranium enrichment technology it desired. These accounts and International Atomic Energy Agency reports describe how, over the next six years, a complex network of companies and individuals in Malaysia, Switzerland, Pakistan, Spain, Turkey, South Africa, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates supplied Libya with uranium enrichment components.⁵⁴

Libya's chemical weapons programs were more advanced and independent than its nuclear weapons development activities. In 1986 and 1987, U.S. officials suspected Libya of using Iranian-supplied chemical weapons against military forces in neighboring Chad and provided the Chadian military with protective equipment to guard against further Libyan attacks.⁵⁵ During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Libyan government developed chemical weapons production facilities at Rabta, Sebha, and Tarhuna with technology acquired from a number of western European and Asian firms.⁵⁶ The plants produced large amounts of chemical weapons and components, including 23 tons of mustard gas. Libya's ballistic missile program relied on foreign technical assistance to produce Scud-B and a limited number of Scud-C missiles, but was limited by a lack of indigenous technical skill and ineffective management.⁵⁷

Termination of WMD and Missile Programs. In 1999, Libyan officials approached the Clinton Administration and offered to dismantle Libya's chemical weapons programs in exchange for a loosening of U.S. terrorism sanctions. The offer was rejected in an effort to maintain pressure on Libya to comply with U.S. and

Israelis have... Otherwise, the Arabs will have the right to possess that weapon." John Bolton, Remarks to the Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC, May 6, 2002.

⁵⁴ The IAEA does not directly identify Dr. Khan or Pakistan as a source for nuclear weapons designs or enrichment equipment disclosed by Libya. Leslie Lopez, "Libyans Got Nuclear Training at Malaysian Company, Police Say," *Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2004; Stephen Fidler and Mark Huband, "Turks and South Africans 'Helped Libya's Secret Nuclear Arms Project'," *Financial Times*, June 10, 2004; Craig Whitlock and Shannon Smiley, "Germany Arrests Man in Libyan Atomic Case," *Washington Post*, Oct. 12, 2004; Douglas Frantz and William C. Rempel, "New Find in a Nuclear Network," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 28, 2004.

⁵⁵ Elaine Sciolino, "U.S. Sends 2,000 Gas Masks to the Chadians," *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1987.

⁵⁶ Joshua Sinai, "Libya's Pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Nonproliferation Review*, Spring/Summer 1997, pp. 92-100; Anthony H. Cordesman, Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 1999; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) et al., "Educational Module on Chemical and Biological Weapons Non-proliferation: Case Study: Libya," 1998-2001.

⁵⁷ Andrew Koch, "Libya's Missile Programme Secrets Revealed," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Aug. 18, 2004.

United Nations demands in the Lockerbie airliner bombing case (see below). Following the Lockerbie settlement, Sayf Al Islam Al Qadhafi and intelligence chief Musa Kusa re-engaged with U.S. and British intelligence authorities beginning in March 2003 regarding Libya's weapons of mass destruction programs. The October 2003 interception of the freighter *BBC China*, which was carrying centrifuge components to Libya, accelerated negotiations and led to assessment visits by U.S. and British personnel later that month and in early December 2003.

On December 19, 2003, Foreign Minister Abd Al Rahman Shalqam read a statement on Libyan national television announcing the government's decision to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction and long range missile programs and to invite international inspectors to Libya to remove materials and perform verifications. Qadhafi publicly endorsed the statement, paving the way for the removal of WMD-related equipment from Libya in January and March 2004.⁵⁸ Subsequent reviews of seized material and interviews with Libyan officials indicated that Libya remained far from developing a nuclear weapons capability, although A.Q. Khan sold Libya a crude nuclear weapons design and some components necessary to begin a uranium enrichment program. However, as of late 2003, Libya had not obtained key pieces of equipment, such as a sufficient number of high precision rotors to power its enrichment centrifuges.⁵⁹

Motives for Disarmament. Officials and independent observers have attributed Libya's decision to end its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction to a number of factors. Administration officials have argued that U.S. military action in Iraq in 2003 demonstrated to Libya the resolve of the Bush Administration to eliminate perceived threats to U.S. security posed by states associated with terrorism and in pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. In contrast, Libyan officials have denied that external pressure or threats influenced their government's decision making processes and have characterized the decision as a sovereign initiative to restore Libya's ties with the international community and improve its security and economy. Most independent observers have argued that Libya's decision was a calculated move designed to extricate the country from the international sanctions regime that was limiting its economic activity and contributing to the deterioration of its vital oil and natural gas infrastructure. Libyan officials have pointed to the financial and economic rewards associated with its international re-engagement, although Qadhafi has stated his belief that Libya should be more directly and substantively rewarded by the United States for its decision to disarm.

⁵⁸ Statement of Assistant Secretary of State for Verification and Compliance Paula A. DeSutter Before the House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Human Rights, Sept. 22, 2004; and, Douglas Franz and Josh Meyer, "The Deal to Disarm Kadafi," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 13, 2005.

⁵⁹ William J. Broad, "Libya's Crude Bomb Design Eases Western Experts' Fear," *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 2004; David Crawford, "Libya Was Far From Building Nuclear Bomb," *Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2004; and, William J. Broad, "Arms Control Group Says U.S. Inflated Libya's Nuclear Bid," *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 2004.

International Controls and Inspections. Libya acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1975. Libya's nuclear research facility at Tajura has been subject to IAEA safeguards since 1980. Since Libya announced its intent to abandon its weapons of mass destruction programs, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have monitored and assisted in ongoing disarmament activities. Libya signed an "additional protocol" agreement in March 2004 granting IAEA inspectors greater access to its nuclear facilities. The IAEA continues to evaluate Libyan disclosure statements related to the scope of its uranium enrichment and nuclear weapons development activities, particularly with regard to the sources of the materials Libya acquired from the proliferation network of Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. As a result of the 2003 WMD disarmament decision, Libya signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 2004. Libya also committed to eliminating all its ballistic missiles beyond a 300-kilometer range with a payload of 500 kilograms and agreed to abide by Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) guidelines.

As of October 2005, all materials and components associated with Libya's nuclear weapons development program have been removed and all associated activities have stopped. Libya returned highly enriched nuclear fuel assemblies from its Tajura research reactor to Russia in 2004, which will be replaced with low enriched fuel under an agreement between the United States, Russia, and Libya.⁶⁰ Libya has submitted an inventory of its chemical weapons and related activities to the OPCW and has destroyed over 3,500 munitions designed to disperse chemical agents. The OPCW has verified Libya's inventory and approved the conversion of a chemical weapons facility into a pharmaceutical plant for the production of HIV/AIDS and malaria medication. The Department of State began retraining assistance programs for Libyan scientists in 2004, and President Bush recently waived provisions of the Arms Export Control Act in order to allow U.S. firms to "possibly participate" in the destruction of Libya's remaining chemical munitions and precursors, which is scheduled to be complete by April 2007.⁶¹

⁶⁰ *International Atomic Energy Agency*, Staff Report: Removal of High-Enriched Uranium in Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, March 8, 2004; *Interfax* (Moscow), "TVEL to Deliver Nuclear Fuel to Research Reactor in Libya," Oct. 19, 2005.

⁶¹ Remarks by the President on Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., Feb. 11, 2004; *Reuters*, "Bush Waives Some Arms Export Restrictions on Libya," Sept. 28, 2005.

Appendix A: Libya's Pre-Qadhafi History

Libya's Colonial Experience

The Ottoman Empire and Qaramanli Dynasty. Ottoman forces first occupied the coastal regions of the territory that now constitutes Libya in the mid-16th century. However, Ottoman administrators faced stiff and near constant resistance from tribal confederations and a rival independent state in the Fezzan region, all of which limited the Ottomans' political influence. Beginning in 1711, a semi-independent state under Turkish official Ahmed Qaramanli emerged in Tripoli and established control over the Ottoman provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, with Fezzan remaining contested. The Qaramanli family maintained its power and independent rule until the early 19th century through naval privateers and pirates under its control who were used to collect tribute and ransom from merchant vessels seized in the Mediterranean Sea.

"The Shores of Tripoli". The Qaramanli naval forces of Tripoli formed one component of a regional grouping commonly referred to as "the Barbary pirates," which played a pivotal role in shaping the foreign and military policies of the young United States. Beginning in the late 1780s, a series of confrontations between U.S. merchant ships and naval raiding parties from Tripoli and other neighboring city-states such as Algiers and Tunis led to the destruction of U.S. maritime cargo and the seizure of U.S. hostages. Subsequent negotiations between the United States and the governments of the Barbary states concluded with the signing of some of the first bilateral treaties in U.S. history, including U.S. agreements to pay tribute to Tripoli in exchange for the safe passage of U.S. vessels off what is now the Libyan coast.

Disputes over the terms of this bilateral agreement and continuing attacks on U.S. merchant ships impressed upon the U.S. government the need for a naval protection force to safeguard U.S. commercial activity in the Mediterranean. This need eventually was satisfied by the creation of the United States Navy by Congress in April 1798. An attack on the U.S. consulate in Tripoli in 1801 and further attacks on U.S. ships sparked open hostilities between the newly commissioned light naval forces of the United States and the privateers of Tripoli. Frequent naval engagements from 1801 to 1805 were often won by U.S. forces, but one skirmish in 1804 ended with the grounding of the *U.S.S. Philadelphia* and the capture of her crew. The conflict culminated in the overland seizure of the eastern Libyan city of Darnah by U.S. Marines and a team of recruited indigenous forces in 1805 - the basis for the reference to "the shores of Tripoli" in the Marine Corps hymn. The fall of Darnah compelled the Qaramanli leadership in Tripoli to relent to demands to ransom the U.S. prisoners and sign a "treaty of peace and friendship."

The decline of Qaramanli naval power following the confrontation with the United States contributed to the dynasty's steady loss of political power. Ottoman authorities reoccupied Tripoli in 1835 and began a campaign to pacify and coopt the region's tribal confederations. The Ottomans solicited the cooperation of the leaders of a conservative revivalist Sufi order known as the *Sanusiyah* based in Cyrenaica, which they allowed to raise an independent militia and participate in a tacit ruling partnership. Although the Ottoman administrative structure imposed in the 19th

century formed the basis for a centralized state, the penetration of Ottoman political power remained incomplete and regional resistance to Ottoman reforms and central authority persisted into the 20th century.

Italian Annexation and Post War Uncertainty. Italy annexed Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in 1911, and the Ottoman Empire's subsequent release of its claim to its territory in 1912, marked the beginning of a violent twenty-year period of resistance to Italian rule led by the Sanussi order and local tribes. The Italian occupation authorities dismantled the remaining Ottoman governing structures and disrupted the activities of social and cultural institutions across Libya. Sanussi resistance fighters were defeated during World War I, and the international community formally recognized Italian control over the territory in 1924. A second round of anti-Italian insurgency spurred a violent crackdown by Italian forces under Mussolini, who renamed the territory Libya in 1929. Resistance based in Cyrenaica was worn down and ultimately crushed by 1931. In 1934, Italian peasant colonists began entering the provinces, leading to the displacement of local farmers and the uprooting of established agricultural communities across the country. The population of Cyrenaica remained hostile to Italian rule and its Sanussi leaders allied themselves with British colonial forces in neighboring Egypt.

During the Second World War, Libya served as a staging ground for Italian and German attacks on French North Africa and British-held Egypt. Pivotal battles took place in Cyrenaica from 1940 to early 1943, when German and Italian forces were forced from Libya by British troops under General Bernard Montgomery. British-organized Sanussi fighters played a role in supporting allied operations against German and Italian forces. Following the war, Libya's provinces were divided under British and French protection until the disposition of Italy's former colonies could be negotiated. Protracted and complex negotiations continued for years. In November 1949, U.N. General Assembly Resolution 289 declared that the three disparate regions would be united in a single, independent state. The resolution also dispatched a United Nations Commissioner to assist a national assembly representing the regions in creating institutions for a new state that was to assume sovereignty no later than January 1, 1952. The strength of tribal and regional identities complicated the subsequent negotiations and strongly influenced the new government following independence.

Independence and Monarchy, 1951-1969

A constitution agreed to by the U.N.-assisted National Constituent Assembly in October 1951 established a federal system of government with central authority vested in King Idris As Sanussi I and legislative authority vested in a Prime Minister, a Council of Ministers, and a bicameral legislature. On December 24, 1951, the United Kingdom of Libya became one of the first independent states in Africa. The first parliamentary election was held in February 1952, one month after independence. Political parties were banned by the king shortly after independence was declared, and Libya's first decade of independence was characterized by continuous bargaining and rivalry among the provincial governments over taxation, development, and constitutional issues. In 1963, King Idris replaced the federal system of government with a unitary monarchy that centralized royal authority, in part to streamline the development of the country's newly discovered oil resources.

Prior to the discovery of marketable oil in 1959, the Libyan government was largely dependent on economic aid and technical assistance it received from international institutions and through military basing agreements with the United States and United Kingdom. The U.S.-operated air base at Wheelus field outside of Tripoli served as an important Strategic Air Command base and center for military intelligence operations throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Oil wealth brought rapid economic growth and greater financial independence to Libya in the 1960s, but the weakness of national institutions and Libyan elites' growing identification with the pan-Arab socialist ideology of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser contributed to the gradual marginalization of the monarchy under King Idris. Popular criticism of U.S. and British basing agreements grew, becoming amplified in wake of Israel's defeat of Arab forces in the 1967 Six Day War. King Idris left the country in mid-1969 for medical reasons, setting the stage for a military coup in September, led by a young, devoted Nasserite army captain named Muammar Al Qadhafi.

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