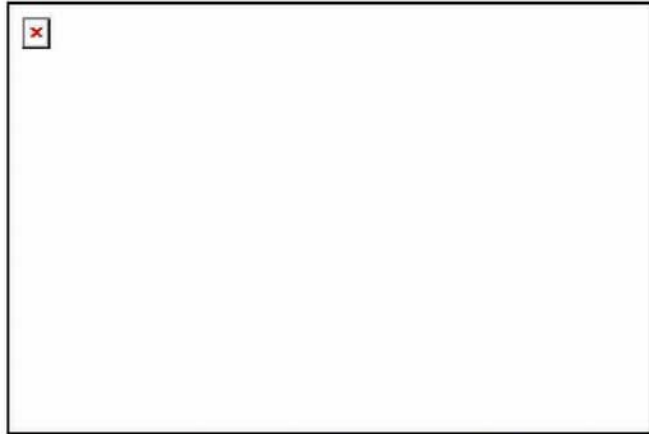


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ANNEX 9.4

Saif al-Islam says "ready" as west flexes military muscle Gaddafi fights as US warships sail into Mediterranean



People make the V-sign during a demonstration in the streets of Nalut, in western Libya

(TRIPOLI (AlArabiya.net, Agencies

Two U.S. amphibious assault ships, the USS Kearsarge and the USS Ponce, entered Egypt's Suez Canal on Wednesday, on their way to the Mediterranean as Western nations put more pressure on Muammar Gaddafi to stop a violent crackdown and step aside. Gadhafi's forces battled poorly armed rebels for control of towns near the capital trying to create a buffer zone around his seat of power. The increasingly violent clashes threatened to transform the day popular rebellion in Libya into a drawn-out civil war. Up to 14 people have been -15 .killed during the violent clashes, according to Al Arabiya reporter

The forces sent by the Libyan leader seized back Marsa al-Brega after violent clashes with rebels who had controlled the town 800 km (500 miles) east of the capital Tripoli, the rebel .officers told Reuters

It's true. There was aerial bombardment of Brega and Gaddafi's forces have taken it," Mohammed Youssef, an officer in the town of Ajdabiyah which is about 75 km (47 miles) .from Brega, told Reuters on Wednesday

However, a Libyan government spokesman said that reports of Libyan government counter-attacks on rebel-held towns in the east of the country were false

Asked about reports of attacks on Marsa al-Brega and Ajdabiyah, spokesman Moussa .Ibrahim said: "I very much doubt it. I believe it's one of those false reports

The assaults are the most significant military success for Gaddafi since the uprising began

two weeks ago and set off a confrontation that Washington says could descend into a long
.civil war unless the veteran strongman ruler steps down

"The stakes are high"

The U.S. ships were at the southern mouth of the canal, a canal official said, adding that they
.were expected to pass through by 3:30 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. local time

The United States had said on Monday it was moving ships and planes closer to Libya. The
.Kearsarge can carry 2,000 Marines

The White House said the ships were being redeployed in preparation for possible
.humanitarian efforts but stressed it "was not taking any options off the table

We are looking at a lot of options and contingencies. No decisions have been made on any
.other actions," U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said

However, U.S. defense leaders said imposing a no-fly zone over Libya would be
extraordinarily" complex and NATO allies have yet to agree on any military intervention in"
.the crisis

In the years ahead, Libya could become a peaceful democracy, or it could face protracted"
civil war, or it could descend into chaos," U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the
.House Foreign Affairs Committee

".The stakes are high"

Gaddafi remained defiant and his son, Saif al-Islam, warned the West against launching
.military action. He said the veteran ruler would not step down or go into exile

Warning that Libya is at the crossroads of peaceful democracy and civil war, the United
States vowed Tuesday to press leader Gaddafi to quit by squeezing him economically and
.militarily

The United States said Libya could sink into civil war unless Gaddafi quits amid fears that
the uprising, the bloodiest against long-serving rulers in the Middle East, could cause a
.humanitarian crisis

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U.S. Secretary of State
Hillary

Saif al-Islam said last week that Libya faces civil war and "rivers
".of blood

Italy said it was sending a humanitarian mission to neighboring
Tunisia to provide food and medical aid to as many as 10,000
.people who had fled violence in Libya on its eastern border

Tunisian border guards fired into the air on Tuesday to try to

.control a crowd of people clamoring to cross the frontier

"Using force "not acceptable

About 70,000 people have passed through the Ras Jdir border post in the past two weeks, and
 .many more of the hundreds of thousands of foreign workers in Libya are expected to follow

Using force against Libya is not acceptable. There's no reason, but if they want ... we are'
 .ready, we are not afraid," Saif al-Islam told Sky television

Clinton said Washington understands the Libyan opposition wants to "be seen as doing this
 by themselves" as they mull ways to dislodge Gaddafi and his forces from the capital Tripoli
 .and the few other areas they hold

But she said the Pentagon and NATO allies have "begun to look at potential planning,
 preparedness in the event that we feel it's necessary for both humanitarian and other reasons
 ".that there would have to be actions taken

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☐

She said "one of those actions that is under review is a no-fly
 zone," where Libyan warplanes and helicopters would be
 grounded by U.S. and allied military force to prevent them from
 .attacking the Libyan people

.But there were also doubts about such action

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi

There is no unanimity within NATO for the use of armed force," Defense Secretary Robert'
 Gates said in a joint press conference with the U.S. military's top officer, Admiral Mike
 .Mullen

".As for a no-fly zone, Mullen said "it's an extraordinarily complex operation to set up

Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, earlier told NBC television "we are
 going to squeeze him (Gaddafi) economically in conjunction with the rest of the economic
 ".community. We'll squeeze him militarily

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe sounded a note of caution, saying military intervention
 .would not happen without a clear United Nations mandate

British Prime Minister David Cameron, who said Britain would work with allies on
 preparations for a no-fly zone in Libya, said it was unacceptable that "Colonel Gaddafi can
 ".be murdering his own people using airplanes and helicopter gunships

"No-fly zone could be "challenging

General James Mattis, commander of U.S. Central Command, told a Senate hearing that
 imposing a no-fly zone would be a "challenging" operation. "You would have to remove air

defense capability in order to establish a no-fly zone, so no illusions here," he said. "It would
".be a military operation

Analysts said Western leaders were in no mood to rush into the conflict after drawn-out
involvements in Afghanistan and Iraq

Gaddafi, a survivor of past coup attempts, told the U.S. ABC network and the BBC on
Monday: "All my people love me," dismissing the significance of a rebellion that has ended
his control over much of oil-rich eastern Libya

Rebel fighters said the balance of the conflict was swinging their way. "Our strength is
growing and we are getting more weapons. We are attacking checkpoints," said Yousef
Shagan, a spokesman in Zawiyah, 50 km (30 miles) from Tripoli

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Captain Faris Zwei

A rebel army officer in the eastern city of Ajdabiyah said rebel
units were becoming more organized

All the military councils of Free Libya are meeting to form a
unified military council to plan an attack on Gaddafi security
units, militias and mercenaries," Captain Faris Zwei said. He
said there were more than 10,000 volunteers in the city, plus
defecting soldiers

The New York Times reported that the rebels' revolutionary council was debating whether to
ask for Western air strikes on some of Gaddafi's military assets under a United Nations
banner

The Times said Abdel-Hafidh Ghoga, the council's spokesman, declined to comment on its
deliberations but said: "If it is with the United Nations, it is not a foreign intervention,"
which the rebels have said they oppose

The Times said there was no indication the U.N. Security Council would approve such a
request, or that Libyans seeking to oust Gaddafi would welcome it

Symbols of Gaddafi's regime

Gaddafi replaced two of his ministers who had defected to support the uprising seeking to
oust him, Libyan state television said on Wednesday

Gaddafi put in place Masoud Abdel Hafiz instead of Abdel Fattah Younes al-Abidi as
interior minister and replaced ex-justice minister Mustafa Mohammed Abud Ajleil with
Mohammed Amhamad al-Qamoudy

Mohamed Aqri al-Mahgoubly replaced Abdul-Rahman al-Abbar as prosecutor general, who
had also resigned and joined the opposition last week

Despite the widespread collapse of Gaddafi's writ, his forces were fighting back in some regions. A reporter on the Tunisian border saw Libyan troops reassert control at a crossing abandoned on Monday, and residents of Nalut, about 60 km (35 miles) from the border, said they feared pro-Gaddafi forces were planning to recapture the town.

Mohammed, a resident of rebel-held Misrata, told Reuters by phone: "Symbols of Gaddafi's regime have been swept away from the city. Only a (pro-Gaddafi) battalion remains at the city's air base but they appear to be willing to negotiate safe exit out of the air base. We are not sure if this is genuine or just a trick to attack the city again."

Across the country, tribal leaders, officials, military officers and army units have defected to the rebels.

Tripoli is a clear Gaddafi stronghold, but even in the capital, loyalties are divided. Many on the streets on Tuesday expressed loyalty, but a man who described himself as a military pilot said: "One hundred percent of Libyans don't like him."

The U.N. General Assembly on Tuesday unanimously suspended Libya's membership of the U.N. Human Rights Council. A U.N. Security Council resolution on Saturday called for a freeze on Gaddafi's assets and a travel ban and refers his crackdown to the International Criminal Court.

The United States has frozen \$30 billion in Libyan assets.

Libya's National Oil Corp said output had halved because of the departure of foreign workers. Brent crude prices surged above \$116 a barrel as supply disruptions and the potential for more unrest in the Middle East and North Africa kept investors on edge.

Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper, citing unnamed U.S. sources, said British special forces were preparing to seize mustard gas and other potential chemical weapons in Libya.

It quoted unnamed British sources as saying they had not yet received a specific U.S. request for involvement, but officials said plans were being drawn up for "every eventuality."