

**Assistant Secretary of Defense Derek Chollet
International Security Affairs
U.S. Department of Defense**

**House Foreign Affairs Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee
“Security Situation in Libya”
June 25, 2014; 2:00pm to 4:00pm**

Madam Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about the security situation in Libya and the Defense Department’s approach for addressing these challenges.

Introduction

Libya remains a country in transition, and the path towards stability continues to present a series of challenges. Libya’s institutions across the board remain weak, and the Ministry of Defense is no exception. Qaddafi’s style of rule and his reliance on non-Libyan paramilitary forces to guard his regime at the expense of the armed forces left little in the way of functioning national institutions after his removal. The United States and its many partners have since grappled with the immense difficulties of helping Libya rebuild its political and security institutions. The effect of Qaddafi’s legacy, particularly his deep neglect of the Libyan Armed Forces, has left the current government unable to provide security for its own institutions or critical infrastructure, disarm militias, or exercise control over the country’s vast borders. As a result, the Libyan government’s reach and capacity is severely limited, and it is forced to rely on unruly militias to provide a semblance of security and rule of law. Moreover, violent extremist groups have exploited Libya’s permissive security environment to establish a presence in the country and to smuggle fighters and weapons across its borders, helping to fuel instability across the region and stirring alarm among Libya’s neighbors in North Africa, Europe, and the Sahel.

The Department of Defense is prioritizing its assistance to focus on building Libya's security capacity and improving the government's ability to counter terrorism, protect government institutions and key infrastructure, and counter weapons proliferation. Since 2011, we have sought to build a partnership with Libya based on shared interests and our strong support for Libya's democratic transition. I will use my opening remarks to touch on our work with the Libyan General Purpose Force, CT training programs, border security initiatives, the elimination of chemical weapons, and embassy security efforts.

General Purpose Force

First, I would like to address our efforts to strengthen the defense capabilities of the Libyan government. The Department of Defense recognizes that a key element of Libya's transition is the successful development of the Libyan Armed Forces. Now more than ever, Libya needs capable armed forces under the control of a democratically elected central government.

At the request of the Libyan government, last year the United States committed to train a General Purpose Force (GPF) of 5,000-8,000 Libyan military personnel. This training effort is intended to help the government form the core of the military it requires to protect government institutions and key infrastructure, and to maintain law and order. The Government of Libya has committed to fund this training program fully through a Foreign Military Sales case, and has provided initial funding. We anticipate that the U.S.-led GPF training program will begin at a joint U.S.-Bulgarian training facility in Bulgaria later this year and continue for five to eight years.

As with the 2011 effort to protect the Libyan people from the brutality of the Qaddafi regime, the effort to help build Libya's security forces has strong international support. We are joined by partners who share our interest in supporting the Libyan government as it works to bring stability to the country. The United Kingdom, Italy, and Turkey are also taking part in the GPF training effort and have committed to training a total of 7,000 additional Libyan personnel. We are working in close coordination with these countries and Libya and have successfully standardized the training programs among all GPF training providers. Although we and our partners' programs are at different stages of planning and execution, the output of trained Libyan military personnel is intended to be very similar. The Turkish, Italian, and U.K. training programs have already begun and we continue to assess their lessons learned as we move forward.

Several factors have hampered the execution of our GPF training program. The GPF concept was initially conceived last spring by then-Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan. Zeidan's abrupt departure from office in March 2014 and the ensuing political turmoil and turnover in senior political and military leaders have disrupted our progress. The deteriorating security environment in Tripoli has also proven difficult, and the security vacuum in the capital inhibits the ability of Defense Department personnel to operate on the ground. Despite these setbacks, we continue to work with Libyan officials when possible to ensure all training candidates are properly prepared for training, meet human rights standards in accordance with U.S. law, and have no known associations with extremist groups. At this stage, two important steps remain for U.S. GPF training to commence, specifically Libyan approval of the Letter of Offer and Acceptance and allocation of funding in addition to the approval of the bilateral technical agreement between Libya and Bulgaria.

Madam Chairman, the GPF training program is a large part of a broader, comprehensive effort, by the United States, our European Allies, NATO, the European Union, and the United Nations to rebuild and strengthen Libya's defense institutions. This includes the provision of technical assistance and advice through bilateral efforts from our European Allies and the UN Support Mission in Libya. Additionally, NATO has agreed in principle to a Libyan request to provide an advisory team to the Libyan Ministry of Defense, but has not yet received Libyan approvals. The United States is acting in close coordination with our partner nations and international organizations to provide effective support to Libya's defense institutions.

CT Training Programs

Second, the Department of Defense is working with the Libyan government to develop its capacity to conduct counterterrorism operations. With congressional support, we have funded programs to develop Libya's counter-terrorism forces via a joint State-DoD Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF) program to train two companies of Libyan Special Operations Forces (\$7.75M) and a program to train and equip a Libyan Special Operations Forces support company (\$8.42M) using the "global train and equip" authority of Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006, as amended. We believe that these programs will positively impact Libya's security situation. The programs should begin soon.

Border Security

Third, Libya's border regions have become a major area of instability as a result of the prolonged political unrest, escalating violence, and the limited capacity of the Libyan central government. The cross-border movement of violent extremists, the trafficking of weapons and

other illicit goods, and the massive influx of migrants using Libyan ports as a point of departure are also causing alarm among Libya's neighbors and our European allies. France, Algeria, and Tunisia have expressed serious concerns about Libya's western and southwestern border areas, specifically regarding the flow of extremists and weapons between Libya, Mali, and the Sahel region. Egypt is also troubled by the deteriorating security situation in Eastern Libya. Earlier this month, Egypt announced that it would close its main northwestern border crossing with Libya following a series of clashes between its border guards and heavily armed smugglers. Libya's expansive maritime borders are also proving to be a source of instability. Since October 2013, Italy has conducted an extensive maritime security and rescue operation in the Mediterranean Sea in response to an unprecedented wave of migration. Italian officials have reported that more than 50,000 migrants have arrived in their country in 2014—many coming by way of Libyan ports.

The situation along Libya's borders is concerning to the United States and our partners. To help address these problems, we are pursuing a \$14.9M program under GSCF authority to build Libya's inter-ministerial border security capacity. This program is still in the planning stages as we have had to re-scope our initial plans due in large part to our inability to travel freely in Libya. We are coordinating our efforts with the European Union Border Assistance Mission to train and equip Libyan border security officials.

Chemical Weapons

Fourth, while the United States has been working on long-term efforts to strengthen Libya's security institutions since the fall of the Qaddafi regime, we have also assisted Libya with the destruction of its remaining weapons of mass destruction. I am pleased to report to the

Committee that Libya is free of weapons of mass destruction since January 2014. Furthermore, there is no evidence that any chemical weapons or agents remain in Libya.

The destruction of Libya's chemical weapons stockpile was achieved through the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program, which complemented efforts by the Department of State's Nonproliferation and Disarmament Fund. The Defense Threat Reduction Agency implemented this effort using contractors for all on-the-ground work. The total cost of the program reached approximately \$50M. The destruction was realized through close cooperation between the U.S. and Libyan governments and international partners—especially Germany and Canada—and was overseen by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This accomplishment demonstrates that even war-torn nations can declare and eliminate their chemical agents and weapons in a safe and timely fashion.

Embassy Security

Lastly, I would like to address U.S. Embassy security, and the recent capture of Ahmed Abu Khatallah. While we work to foster a partnership with Libya, we continue to be mindful of the immense challenges and risks operating in an uncertain security environment. We are very concerned about the rising violence and continued political instability in Libya and we continue to monitor developments there closely. The Defense Department is committed to the protection of U.S. personnel and facilities around the world and is prepared to respond to a variety of situations. On several occasions, the Department of Defense, in close coordination and consultation with the State Department, has forward-positioned and changed the readiness status of crisis response forces in the region in response to heightened threats.

Due to the recent political unrest and renewed fighting in Tripoli and Benghazi, the Department of Defense forward-positioned additional U.S. military forces to support our diplomatic presence in Libya. The Department of Defense stands ready to respond to a crisis and take action to protect U.S. personnel and facilities in Libya.

Abu Khatallah Capture

Madam Chairman, as you are aware, on June 15, the U.S. military, in cooperation with U.S. law enforcement personnel, conducted a successful operation in Libya in which Abu Khatallah was captured. Abu Khatallah is a key figure in the September 11, 2012, attacks on U.S. facilities in Benghazi in which Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans were killed. Until his capture, Khatallah was a senior leader of the militant group Ansar al-Sharia in Benghazi, which is designated by the Department of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. There were no civilian casualties in this operation, and all U.S. personnel involved are safe. Abu Khatallah is in U.S. custody in a secure location outside Libya. The success of this mission was due to the extraordinary capabilities and efforts of our military, law enforcement, and intelligence personnel, and our unrelenting commitment to hold accountable those who harm Americans.

Conclusion

Madam Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, and Members of the Subcommittee, amid the hope for Libya's future after the fall of the Qaddafi regime in October 2011, President Obama said, "We're under no illusions — Libya will travel a long and winding road to full democracy. There will be difficult days ahead. But the United States, together with

the international community, is committed to the Libyan people. You have won your revolution. And now, we will be a partner as you forge a future that provides dignity, freedom and opportunity.” We continue to support Libya’s transition, which includes parliamentary elections underway today, and work closely with the Libyans and international partners toward that end. The Defense Department will prudently continue to address the challenges and risks in Libya and will be clear-sighted about what we can accomplish and how quickly. Although helping Libya during this period of instability is a difficult task, it is important to stress that Libya’s democratically elected leaders have been willing and eager partners in terms of strengthening military ties with the United States and our allies and partners. Although at times our engagements have been complicated by Libyan politics and the security environment, our commitment to strengthen Libya’s security institutions during its democratic transition has not wavered.

I look forward to your questions.