

# Gaddafi defiant as fighting tears Libyan rebel stronghold

US to deploy 'unique capabilities' in Libya action: Hillary

AFP, AL-MARI, Paris

Fighting raged around Libya's rebel stronghold of Benghazi yesterday as Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi gave a defiant response to world leaders planning military action against him.

A huge plume of smoke rose over Libya's second city as thousands of people fled eastward after a series of air strikes and sustained shelling, an AFP reporter said.

Correspondents reported that tanks belonging to Gaddafi's forces had entered the city of more than one million people mid-morning.

The Libyan government insisted it was observing a ceasefire it had announced on Friday, shortly after the United Nations Security Council voted to authorise the use of force against Gaddafi's troops to spare civilians.

It said its armed forces were under attack west of Benghazi and had responded in self-defence.

But the rebels, who have been trying to overthrow the Libyan leader for more than a month, said his troops had continued to bombard cities, violating

the ceasefire continuously since its declaration.

"The gangs of Al-Qaeda attacked the units of the Libyan armed forces stationed to the west of Benghazi," a statement carried by the official Jana news agency said, using Tripoli's term for the insurgents.

It accused the rebels of using "a helicopter and a fighter jet to bomb the Libyan armed forces in blatant violation of the no-fly zone imposed by the UN Security Council."

The United States will deploy its "unique capabilities" as part of the UN-sanctioned military operation against Muammar Gaddafi, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said yesterday.

"America has unique capabilities" to help enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1973 authorising military action, Clinton said in Paris after a summit on Libya.

"We will bring them to bear to help our European and Canadian allies and air partners stop further violence against civilians, including through the effective implementation of a no-fly zone."

"Gaddafi continues to defy the

world... attacks on civilians go on," Clinton said, adding that "further delay would only put more civilians at risk."

"The world will not sit idly by while more innocent civilians are killed. The United States will support our allies and partners as they move to enforce Resolution 1973. We are standing with the people of Libya, and we will not waver in our efforts to protect them."

Clinton hailed Arab involvement in action against Libya, after the 22-member Arab League last week also called for a no-fly zone.

Meanwhile, hundreds of loyalists of Gaddafi massed Saturday at his Bab al-Aziziyah headquarters and at the international airport, state television said, as France launched an air strike on Libya.

And 50 foreign journalists were taken on a tour of Bab al-Aziziyah, south of the capital, an AFP correspondent said.

"Crowds are forming around the targets identified by France," state television said, showing pictures of flag-waving people gathering at Gaddafi's headquarters and the airport.



A jet bomber crashes after being shot down in Benghazi as Libya's rebel stronghold came under attack yesterday.

## NATIONS READY TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST LIBYA

**FRANCE**  
French war planes were overflying the rebel bastion of Benghazi yesterday, preventing Gaddafi's air strikes, and were ready to attack his tanks threatening civilians, said President Nicolas Sarkozy.

France has about 100 warplanes, mainly Rafale and Mirage 2000 jets. Air bases at Solenzara in Corsica and in NDjamena in Chad were also on alert.

The aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle will be deployed Sunday to Libya.

**BRITAIN**  
Prime Minister David Cameron said Friday that Britain was moving Tornado and Typhoon fighter jets "in the coming hours" to bases near Libya and would also be offering air-to-air refuelling and surveillance aircraft.

The country has an airbase in Cyprus, where three of its airborne warning and control system (AWACS) planes were recently stationed.

Two frigates, HMS Cumberland and HMS Westminster, were already in the Mediterranean.

**UNITED STATES**  
Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the United States would deploy its "unique capabilities" but gave no further details.

Washington has F-15 and F-16 fighter jets in Sicily, while the USS Barry and the USS Stout, both destroyers equipped with sea-to-ground Tomahawk missiles, are in the Mediterranean.

The USS Bataan, a helicopter-carrying amphibious assault ship, and two other vessels have also been deployed to relieve the USS Kearsarge and the transport docking ship USS Ponce in the Mediterranean.

**CANADA**  
Seven CF-18 jets and a C-17

Globemaster transport plane left Friday for the Mediterranean, media reported, with another C-17 due to be deployed later.

**ARAB NATIONS**  
QATAR said it will contribute to the no-fly zone but has not given details, while a UN diplomat said the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES will participate.

**NATO**  
The 28-nation alliance was discussing whether to participate, but France has indicated that it would prefer Nato did not.

AWACS planes have been flying 24 hours a day in the region for the past week as part of a Nato anti-terror mission. The alliance also decided last week to deploy three ships to the area.

**ITALY**  
Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi offered the use of its seven air bases and held out the possibility of using its own air force and navy.

**NORWAY**  
Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said six F-16 warplanes would be in place "within a few days".

**BELGIUM**  
Defence Minister Pieter De Crem said Belgium could deploy four of the six F-16 fighter jets it has committed to Nato, plus an anti-mine ship.

**GREECE**  
Prime Minister George Papandreou volunteered the use of the island of Crete, which lies northeast of Libya, a diplomat in Paris said.

**NETHERLANDS**  
A diplomat in Paris said the Netherlands would join military action.

## JAPAN DISASTER Death, missing toll nears 20,000

AFP, Osaka

The number of people confirmed dead or listed as missing in Japan neared 20,000 yesterday, eight days after the massive earthquake and tsunami struck.

But there were fears of a far higher death toll from the disaster that wiped out vast residential areas along the Pacific coast of northern Honshu island.

The national police agency said 7,653 people had been confirmed dead and 11,746 officially listed as missing -- a total of 19,399 -- as of 11:00 pm yesterday as a result of the March 11 catastrophe.

Hopes of finding many more survivors amid the rubble have diminished after a cold snap hit Japan's northeast, covering much of the disaster area in snow earlier this week.

The death toll has now well surpassed that of the 7.2-magnitude quake that struck the western Japanese port city of Kobe in 1995, killing 6,434 people.

The March 11 quake is now Japan's deadliest natural disaster since the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake.

The latest police figures for people missing do not include local reports from along the tsunami-hit coast of vast numbers of people unaccounted for.

The mayor of the coastal town of Ishinomaki in Miyagi prefecture said Wednesday that the number of missing there was likely to hit 10,000, Kyodo News reported.

Yesterday, public broadcaster NHK said that around 10,000 people were missing in Miyagi.

## "They want to seize Libya's oil," Says Chavez

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said yesterday that international military action against Libya amounts to an oil grab by Western powers.

French warplanes began patrolling over parts of Libya yesterday, two days after the UN Security Council authorized military action to protect civilians from strongman Gaddafi's forces.

"They want to seize Libya's oil," Chavez, a close ally of Gaddafi, said on television.

Chavez lamented that the international community did not accept his proposal to create a multinational mission to find a peaceful resolution in Libya.

## 5.9 quake hits south of Japan nuke plant

AFP, Osaka

A 5.9 magnitude earthquake rattled Japan's Ibaraki Prefecture south of the stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant yesterday, the US Geological Survey said, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The quake shook buildings in Tokyo, but no damage was immediately reported, public broadcaster NHK said, adding that flights at the capital's Narita Airport were briefly suspended for safety checks before resuming.

The USGS said the quake struck at 6.56pm and was centred 98 kilometres south of Fukushima and 142 kilometres from Tokyo.

The quake struck at a depth of 24.7 kilometres.

Japan's meteorological agency measured the quake at a magnitude of 6.1.

## After Congress, BJP hit by WikiLeaks disclosure

PTI, New Delhi

BJP was hit by the WikiLeaks stating that the party leadership had told them that its criticism of the US in public was to score "easy political points" against UPA and when in power, it would not harm the Indo-US nuclear deal.

The expose, published by "The Hindu", drew immediate strong reaction from ruling Congress which asked BJP to apply to itself the same standards it adopted for the government when it was needlessly disrupting Parliament for the last few days.

The BJP, however, denied there was any double standard and maintained that because of its strong position, the government had to come with 16 amendments to the Civil Nuclear Liability Bill.

Seshadri Chari, BJP National Executive member and RSS pointsman in the party, figured in the diplomatic cables as having told an US embassy official in Delhi in December 2005 "not to read too much into the foreign policy resolution especially the parts relating to the US", which had attacked the UPA's "subsistence" to Washington.

"Chari dismissed the statement (resolution) as standard practice aimed at scoring easy political points against the UPA. BJP spokesman Prakash Javadekar echoed these statements, saying that the BJP was not really upset about the US-India relationship, but merely wanted the Government of India and US government to be more forthcoming about any deal on nuclear policy," the cable said.

## Delwar laid to rest

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From the capital where thousands of people paid their homage to the senior politician, who died in a Singapore hospital on Wednesday at the age of 78.

His sixth janaza was held on the Government Devendra College premises at about 11:45am.

BNP's standing committee members Khondaker Mosharaf Hossain, Moeen Khan, and Mirza Abbas, joint secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, local Awami League lawmaker Jahid Maleque Swapan, former AL minister Moslem Uddin Khan Habu Mia, former BNP Minister Haruner Rashid Khan Monno, former AL lawmaker Samuddin Ahmed, Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal presi-

dent Moazzem Hossain Alal and its secretary Saiful Alam Nirab, district AL president Golam Mohiuddin, central and local BNP leaders attended the janaza.

The leaders also placed wreaths at his coffin.

Later, his body was taken to his constituency where the last janaza was held at Government Ghior College ground after Zohr prayers.

Five janazas for Delwar were held in the capital on Friday. Hundreds of people, including leaders and activists of different political parties, paid homage to the politician.

Delwar was elected parliament member five times, and he served as chief whip in the fifth, sixth and eighth parliament. He was the opposition chief whip in the seventh parliament.

## NEWS IN brief

### Former US secretary of state Warren Christopher dies

AFP, Los Angeles

US secretary of state Warren Christopher, instrumental in negotiating peace in the ex-Yugoslavia and moving forward the Middle East peace process, has died at the age of 85, US media reported yesterday.

The cause of the death mentioned in the reports was kidney and bladder cancer.

Christopher served as secretary of state in the administration of former US president Bill Clinton.



Warren Christopher

### Libya says neighbours will respond to foreign attack

AFP, London

Libya's deputy foreign minister Khaled Kaaim warned yesterday that any foreign intervention would prompt Libya's neighbours to rally behind Muammar Gaddafi, in an interview with BBC radio.

"If there is an attack from outside or a foreign intervention, you will not only see Libyans, you will see people from Algeria, from Tunisia, from Egypt... all of them, they will be part of fighting on the Libyan ground," he said.

"The ceasefire is real, credible and solid," he said.

### Japan opposition rejects unity govt: Media

AFP, Osaka

Japan's prime minister was rebuffed yesterday when he asked the conservative opposition to join his government as it grapples with a natural disaster and a nuclear crisis, media said.

Naoto Kan offered Sadaaki Tanigaki, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, the post of vice premier handling earthquake relief work, Kyodo News reported.

In a phone call, Prime Minister Kan had proposed a unity government containing lawmakers from both parties to overcome the national crisis, the report said.

But Tanigaki was quoted as telling the premier: "I cannot accept it."

Tanigaki did reportedly say the LDP would "spare no efforts to cooperate" in dealing with the calamity, including a stricken nuke plant.

### Yemen Death toll climbs to 52

AFP, Sanaa

Yemen seethed with anger yesterday as medics raised the death toll from a sniper attack on protesters to 52 and thousands rallied despite a state of emergency imposed by the autocratic regime.

The slaughter in the capital Sanaa on Friday afternoon was the bloodiest day in weeks of unrest that has shaken the regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a key US ally in the war against Al-Qaeda militants on the Arabian Peninsula.

The toll climbed overnight as six of the critically wounded succumbed to their injuries, according to medics.

### Thai PM wins no-confidence vote

AFP, Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva survived a no-confidence motion yesterday brought by opposition lawmakers seeking to inflict damage ahead of upcoming elections.

Abhisit won the vote following a four-day censure debate, in which the opposition Pua Thai party accused him of corruption, policy failures and human rights violations.

The premier, who won 249 votes to 184 against him with 11 abstentions, was one of ten ministers named in the motion, all of whom narrowly survived separate votes by garnering the necessary minimum of 238 ballots.

## Pakistan court gives police extra week on Musharraf

AFP, Rawalpindi

A Pakistani court yesterday gave prosecutors one more week to serve an arrest warrant on former president Pervez Musharraf over the murder of ex-premier Benazir Bhutto, court officials said.

Musharraf, who was president when Bhutto was killed in December 2007 in a gun and suicide bomb attack in Rawalpindi, is accused of failing to provide her with adequate security. He now lives in self-imposed exile in London.

Judge Rana Nisar Ahmad, who issued the arrest warrant on February 12, early this month gave police two more weeks to arrest the former military ruler.

## Obama in Brazil talks trade, Libya

AFP, Brasilia

US President Barack Obama encountered demands from Brazil yesterday for a bigger role in the UN Security Council as he began a Latin American visit shadowed by a military showdown with Libya.

Obama hailed Brazil's "extraordinary rise" at a news conference with President Dilma Rousseff, who welcomed the US leader to the presidential palace with a 21-gun salute.

But Libya commanded attention yesterday, as French warplanes were flying over Libya.

Obama, alongside Rousseff, said that the international coalition "is prepared to act."

Brazil, however, was one of five countries that abstained from the UN Security Council vote that authorized the use of "all necessary means" to protect civilians against the forces of Libyan strongman Muammar Gaddafi.

Turning back to the original goals of his trip -- re-engaging with Latin America and expanding business opportunities for US companies -- Obama added: "I believe we've laid the foundation for greater cooperation between the United States and Brazil for decades to come."

Obama has US jobs on his agenda during the three-country trip that includes stops in Chile and El Salvador.

"I want to open more markets around the world so that American companies can do more business and hire more of our people," Obama said in a radio address yesterday.

## Egyptians vote on constitutional changes

AP, Cairo

Eager for their first taste of a free vote in decades, Egyptians formed long lines outside polling centers yesterday to cast their ballots on a package of constitutional amendments sponsored by the ruling military.

The nationwide referendum is the first major test of the country's transition to democracy after a popular uprising overthrew President Hosni Mubarak's authoritarian rule on Feb. 11. Lines began forming in the hours before polls opened, snaking along the streets in highly unusual early turnout for an Egyptian election.