

Strikes stem from confusion

Says Gaddafi son

AFP, Washington

Western coalition strikes stem from a "big misunderstanding" about the nature of Libya's rebellion, Muammar Gaddafi's son said yesterday, claiming the rebels were "gangsters" and "terrorists."

Saif al-Islam, a key figure in the Gaddafi regime who has been tipped as a future Libyan leader, defiantly denied there was any reason for his father to step aside.

"There is a big misunderstanding," he told ABC's "This Week" program. "The whole country is united against the armed militia and the terrorists."

"Our people went to Benghazi to liberate Benghazi from the gangsters and the armed militia," he said.

"So if you, if the Americans want to help the Libyan people in Benghazi... go to Benghazi and liberate Benghazi from the militia and the terrorists."

Gaddafi vows a 'long war'

US applies 'limited action' to destroy Libyan air power, ousting Gaddafi not immediate goal

AFP, Tripoli

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi said all Libya's people have been armed and are ready to fight a "long war" to defeat Western forces attacking his country, in a televised audio message yesterday.

"All the Libyan people are united. The Libyan men and women have been given weapons and bombs... You will not advance, you will not step on this land," said Gaddafi.

"We promise you a long, drawn-out war with no limits," said the Libyan leader, who was speaking on state television for a second straight day without appearing in front of camera.

"We are ready for a long war. You are not prepared for a long war in Libya. We are prepared. This is a very happy moment we are living."

"America, France, or Britain, the Christians that are in a pact against us today, they will not enjoy our oil... You are aggressors, you are animals," said Gaddafi.

"We do not have to retreat from

the battlefield because we are defending our land and our dignity," said the Libyan strongman who has faced a month-long armed uprising focused in the east of the country.

The US, Britain and France bombed Libya with missiles from air and sea overnight Saturday in a multi-national action against Gaddafi's forces under a United Nations Security Council resolution authorising a no-fly zone.

Libyan state media said Western warplanes had bombed civilian targets in Tripoli, causing casualties. An army spokesman said strikes also hit fuel tanks feeding the rebel-held city of Misrata, east of Tripoli.

The US has unleashed a barrage of strikes against the Libyan regime's air defences, but ruled out using ground troops in what President Barack Obama called a "limited military action."

"We must be clear: actions have consequences, and the writ of the international community must be enforced," Obama told reporters while on an official visit to Brazil



Saturday.

"We are answering the calls of a threatened people. And we are acting in the interests of the United States and the world," he said, stressing that Washington was acting in concert "with a broad coalition."

But with nearly 100,000 US troops fighting a protracted war in Afghanistan, Obama made clear that operation "Odyssey Dawn" would not send US troops to Libya.

"As I said yesterday, we will not - I repeat - we will not deploy any US troops on the ground," he said.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen yesterday said the immediate goal of the coalition's intervention in Libya is to protect civilians with a no-fly zone, not to try to oust strongman Muammar Gaddafi.

"The focus of the United Nations Security Council was really Benghazi specifically and to protect the civilians. This is not about going after Gaddafi himself or attacking him at this particular point in time," he said.

In a dramatic show of force, US warships and a British submarine fired at least 110 Tomahawk cruise missiles into Libya against Gaddafi's anti-aircraft missiles and radar Saturday, the US military said.

Admiral William Gortney told reporters at the Pentagon that the cruise missiles "struck more than 20 integrated air defence systems and other air defence facilities ashore."

Early yesterday, CBS News reported that three US B-2 stealth bombers had dropped 40 bombs on

a major Libyan airfield in an attempt to destroy much of the Libyan Air Force.

The missile strikes came despite skepticism in the US military over the risks of intervention, with Defence Secretary Robert Gates repeatedly expressing caution.

The Pentagon has suggested the US military will play a supporting role in operations, employing Tomahawk missiles, electronic jamming aircraft and other resources while European allies fly bombing missions.

The targets included surface-to-air missile sites as well as early warning radar and communication centres.

According to The Washington Post, Western reconnaissance satellites are closely monitoring a small garage at a remote desert site, south of the city of Sirte, where the Libyan government keeps about 10 tons of mustard gas.

Western officials are concerned Gaddafi could use the caustic chemical to kill large numbers of his people, the report said.

Gaddafi feeling world's 'unified will'

Says UN chief

AFP, Paris

Embattled Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi is feeling the "unified will" of the international community through the military campaign launched against his forces in Libya, UN chief Ban Ki-moon said here yesterday.

"He has been killing his own people. He declared that he will search house to house and kill all the people. That is unacceptable," the UN secretary general told AFP before setting off on a trip to Egypt and Tunisia.

"My only hope is that the Libyan authorities should fully abide by the Security Council resolution, ceasefire immediately and take all measures to protect their population," he added.

Also Saturday, Ban attended a Paris crisis summit on Libya and said it showed "the strong and determined unity of the international community."



Anti-war protesters take part in a demonstration in front of the White House in Washington, DC on Saturday.

Gaddafi assault on Benghazi killed 94

AFP, Benghazi

At least 94 people were killed in an assault launched two days ago on the rebel-held Libyan city of Benghazi by forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi, medics and AFP correspondents said yesterday.

"Yesterday we had about 50 (bodies of civilians and rebel fighters) and just today we issued about 35 death certificates," Doctor Khaled Mugasabi, a forensic pathologist at Benghazi's Jala hospital, told AFP.

Separately, AFP correspondents counted nine uncovered bodies of Gaddafi loyalists in a room at Jala hospital, and were told that they were expecting more.

Fighting raged late Friday and Saturday morning between Gaddafi loyalists and rebels in the eastern coastal city of Benghazi, where a rebel fighter jet was downed.

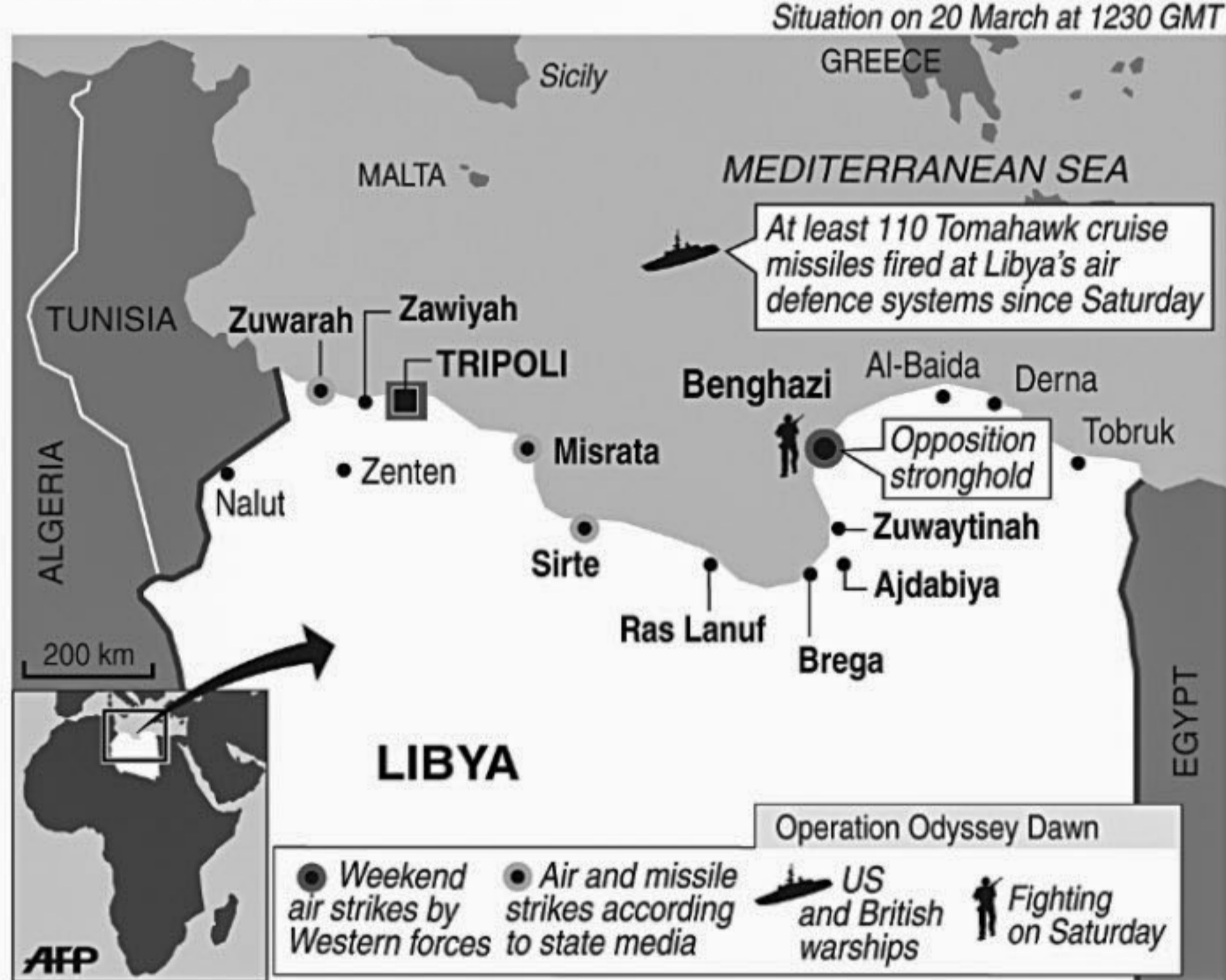
Some of those killed were as young as eight and others 60, according to AFP correspondents who were able to see the records of bodies brought to Jala hospital's morgue overnight.

Inside the morgue, desperate relatives searched for loved ones.

The brother of Fakhri Sallabi, a rebel pilot whose plane was shot down on Saturday over Benghazi, Libya's second city in the east, only had words of praise for his sibling.

"He saved lives of Benghazi. He was born for this day," said the man who declined to be named.

Western forces strike Libya, Gaddafi vows retaliation



NEWS IN brief

Polls open in Haiti's presidential runoff

AFP, Port-au-prince

Polls opened early yesterday in Haiti's runoff presidential elections as voters began choosing between a popular singer and a former first lady as the country's next leader.

Mirlande Manigat, a 70-year-old academic and ex-first lady, and singer Michel Martelly, 50, are competing for the job of rebuilding a nation beset by deep poverty, a quake-shattered infrastructure and a

Strong quake hits Philippines, moderate rocks Taiwan

AFP, Manila

A 6.4-magnitude earthquake hit off the northern coast of the Philippines yesterday, local seismologists said, but there were no immediate reports of any damage or casualties.

The quake was located 117 kilometres northeast of Laoag city in Luzon island at a depth of 50 kilometres, the institute said.

Meanwhile, Taiwan was struck by a 5.5-magnitude yesterday shaking buildings in the capi-

Iran casts 'doubts' on Western aims in Libya

AFP, Tehran

Iran backs the revolt against Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi but "doubts" the aims of Western powers pummeling the country with air strikes, the foreign ministry spokesman said yesterday.

"The action and history of domineering (Western) nations in occupying oppressed nations always cast doubt over their true intentions," he said in reaction to the Western missile and air strikes unleashed on Libya.

Two Gazans shot dead by Israel

AFP, Gaza City

Palestinian medical officials said yesterday they had found two bodies southeast of Gaza City, apparently shot by Israeli troops a day earlier.

It was not immediately clear what they were doing near the border, but an Israeli military spokeswoman said Saturday night the army had opened fire on two men who were spotted moving suspiciously toward a frontier "no-go" zone.

Yemen army urged to ignore orders, minister quits

AFP, Sanaa

Muslim clerics urged Yemeni soldiers to disobey orders and a third minister resigned after the gunning down of more than 50 protesters calling for an end to President's Ali Abdullah Saleh's rule.

Leading clerics said Saleh was responsible for the slaughter following Muslim prayers in Sanaa on Friday, the worst day of bloodshed in more than a month of violent unrest.

"We call on the army and security forces to not carry out any order from anyone to kill and repress" demonstrators, a group of influential clerics in the deeply religious country said in a joint statement.

They also called for Saleh's elite Republican Guard troops to be withdrawn from the capital, where anti-regime protesters have continued a sit-in near Sanaa University despite a state of emergency called after Friday's violence.

Saleh has declared yesterday as a "national day of mourning" for the "martyrs for democracy," while blaming the opposition for "incitement and chaos" that had led to the killings.

N Koreans told to use pets as quake warning

AFP, Seoul

North Korea advised its citizens yesterday to use their pets as an early-warning system for earthquakes, amid heightened fears following Japan's quake-tsunami disaster.

Governments worldwide have focused on ensuring their alert systems go some way to protecting them against the horror wreaked by natural disasters such as the massive tremor and giant waves which killed thousands in Japan on March 11.

While Pyongyang has also told North Koreans about the technology it has in place to anticipate disasters, state media urged the public to take note when animals behave oddly.

The Sunday edition of Rodong Sinmun, a newspaper of the North's ruling party, and a report Saturday from the official Korean Central News Agency warned that people should beware if they see dogs barking incessantly, cattle refusing to eat or horses constantly trying to storm out of stables.

Evidence of the reliability of animal behaviour in predicting quakes remains mixed, although National Geographic reported after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that many species fled to safety before the catastrophe.

Elephants ran for higher ground, dogs refused to go outdoors and flamingos abandoned their low-lying breeding areas, nationalgeographic.com reported.

"The belief that wild and domestic animals possess a sixth sense -- and know in advance when the earth is going to shake -- has been around for centuries," the magazine said.

It is thought that low-frequency electromagnetic signals may cause animals to behave unusually before an earthquake.

Japan's efforts to ease nuke crisis suffer setback

Fukushima plant to be scrapped, 2 found in miracle rescue effort

AP, Fukushima

An unexpected rise in pressure inside a troubled reactor set back efforts to bring Japan's overheating, leaking nuclear complex under control yesterday as concerns grew that as-yet minor contamination of food and water is spreading.

The pressure increase meant plant operators may need to deliberately release radioactive steam, prolonging the nuclear crisis.

Meanwhile, Japan's top government spokesman yesterday signalled that the quake-hit Fukushima nuclear power plant at the centre of an ongoing crisis following a series of explosions would be scrapped.

Two survivors, including an elderly woman, were rescued from the wreckage of a home in Japan's northeast yesterday, nine days after a massive earthquake and tsunami, authorities said.

Sumi Abe and her grandson Jin Abe were in the kitchen when the quake struck on March 11, public broadcaster NHK reported.

The house collapsed with them inside but the grandson was able to reach food from the refrigerator, helping them to survive, rescuers said.

Beyond the disaster area, an already shaken public grew uneasy with official reports that traces of radiation first detected in spinach and milk from farms near the nuclear plant are turning up farther away in tap water, rain

and even dust.

Forecasts for rain yesterday added to nuclear worries.

Temperatures in storage pools for Units 5 and 6 continued their several days of decline yesterday to a safe, cool level, the nuclear safety agency said.

But the buildup in pressure inside the vessel holding Unit 3's reactor renewed the danger, forcing officials to consider venting. The tactic produced explosions during the early days of the crisis.

"Even if certain things go smoothly there would be twists and turns," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano told reporters. "At the moment, we are not so optimistic that there will be a breakthrough."

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