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Jane Hunter
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DIRTY LITTLE WAR AGAINST LIBYA: THE MESSY CLEAN-UP

US operatives in Chad must have been appalled last December, when they were forced to hurriedly dismantle the covert war they had been running against Libya. French troops had stood by and allowed Chad's government, host to the US contra force, to fall to a dissident force.

The guerrilla-masters must also have been perplexed. This time it was not the leakers or the activists at home causing them problems. Indeed, it is likely that the constant monitoring of the US war against Nicaragua by activists and journalists prompted Washington's covert warriors to choose Africa for their next war. They certainly knew that, beyond the apartheid and elephant zones, few US citizens could name the African countries that squirm together along the Atlantic coast and then meander across the desert to the Horn, synonymous - when it is heard of at all - with famine. And indeed, for about two years their war against Libya remained largely unknown.

Yet when the US "military advisers" - it is not clear whether they were from the CIA or one of the military special forces - decided to organize their "contra" force in Chad, they apparently did not consider that, unlike Central America, which they claimed as their own "backyard," they would be operating in someone else's neighborhood and the neighbors might complain.

That is exactly what happened.

Over the remarkably short span of three weeks, former -

Chadian chief of staff Idriss Deby, preferred by France and Libya, and his Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) advanced across the breadth of Chad from Sudan. President Hissein Habre, Washington's man, fled the capital Ndjamena into neighboring Cameroon on December 1, a day before Deby entered the city. The US was forced to evacuate an estimated 700 Libyan contras, while fighting a rearguard action against the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the international media that arrived in Chad to record Deby's accession to power.

The covert war against Libya was launched after the Reagan administration's April 1986 bombing attack on Tripoli and Benghazi failed to drive Col. Muammar Kadafy from power. In a number of ways the anti-Libyan operation was a direct descendant of the Reagan administration's secret war against Nicaragua, not least in the involvement of two prominent players in the Iran-contra affair, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

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Saudi Arabia reportedly played its familiar role as paymaster, setting up a bank account in Libreville, Gabon, under the control of Dr. Mohammed Yusuf Al-Margariaf.³ Since 1981 Margariaf, who was once Libya's auditor general and, until 1980, its ambassador to India, has been secretary-general of the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL).⁴

Asked at a London press conference about the source of the NFSL's funds, Margariaf said they came from Libyan businessmen and "unnamed Arab governments."⁵ Saudi Arabia has been financing rightist clients of the CIA since the Nixon administration.⁶ Even after the embarrassment of having their \$32 million contribution to the contras exposed during congressional hearings on the Iran-contra affair, the Saudis were expected "to continue aiding covert action of mutual interest," US officials said in 1987.⁷ A 1981 National Intelligence Estimate said that funding for Kadafy's opponents came from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and Iraq.⁸

The NFSL is widely believed to have been created by the CIA. The time of its founding coincides with the hoax of the Libyan "hit squads," supposedly sent to assassinate Ronald Reagan.⁹ Morocco provided the NFSL training in 1981 and 1982 as well as a venue for its first congress in 1982. In 1984 the front was based in Sudan.¹⁰ After the overthrow of President Jaafar Niemery, the organization found a home in Egypt, but in 1989, when Cairo and Tripoli began working on their relationship, President Hosni Mubarak allowed the exiles to stay in Egypt, but he ordered them to halt their political activity.¹¹ Most recently, it appears that the NFSL was based in Ndjamena.¹²

Israel too was in its familiar role: Washington's covert partner. Indeed, it appears that the Israelis - who added their trainers to the 30 US trainers flown in in 1987 to launch the enterprise¹³ - were even more enthusiastic than their US allies. Israel favors such joint covert actions as a way of binding the US closer to itself and of building its credit in Washington. Israel also encourage¹⁴ US hostility toward Libya, which threateneg¹⁵ Israeli interests in Africa and, if it ever teamed up with Egypt, would pose a real military threat to Israel.

For human material there was nothing at hand as suitable as the willing veterans of Somoza's Guardia. The only available Libyans were prisoners of war that had been captured by Chad in its wars with Libya over the Aouzou Strip between 1983 and 1987.

The contra-masters succeeded in turning Col. Abdoulgassim Khalifa Haftar, a captured Libyan military commander. They made him the commander of their proxy force.¹⁴

But, out of 2,000 or more Libyan POWs in Chad, only around 700 opted to join the the contra effort. This was not an

overwhelming response, given the POWs alternatives of skimpy

rations (Libya was said to be passing Chad money for their upkeep through Kuwait,¹⁵ but the prisoners' emaciated condition when they were released¹⁶ gave credence to a report that the money went to Habre's secret police, the DDS¹⁷) or execution. The International Commission for the Respect of the African Charter, which monitors compliance with the Organization of African Unity's human rights accords, said that Chad executed several hundred of the POWs.¹⁸ Three high-ranking Libyan POWs were reportedly murdered the day that Hissein Habre fled.¹⁹

A US military source told the French press agency that the Libyans had initially agreed to maintain weapons the Chadian army had captured from Libya and were then gradually turned over the US military advisers for training in "commando" and "terrorist operations."²⁰ Even if that is true, it is illegal under the Geneva Conventions to recruit POWs to fight against their own government unless the prisoners are first set free and then interviewed by the ICRC with no witnesses present. The ICRC recently said that, despite years of efforts to gain access to POWs in Chad, it had only succeeded in registering 53.²¹

The contra army was called the Libyan National Liberation Army (NLA). When the Habre government fell, the NLA was being kept at a "well-armed" camp six miles north of N'djamena.²² Earlier it may have been kept at Ouadi Doum, a base Libya had used when its troops had occupied northern Chad.

When Chadian forces drove the Libyans back out of the north in 1987, they were left in possession of large quantities of Libyan arms. These, they reportedly sold to France and the US, which used its purchases to arm the NLA.²³ In addition, in October 1987, the London newsletter Africa Analysis said that the - CIA had been funneling weaponry - including Stinger surface-to-air missiles - into Chad beyond what Congress had authorized and that the country was dangerously "awash" in weapons.²⁴

Early in its existence Margariaf's NFSL had tried to organize a military "Salvation Corps"²⁵ and in 1984 attempted to assassinate Kadafy²⁶ (who had, reportedly, penetrated the organization²⁷). Now the NLA became NFSL's "military wing" and in the spring of 1989 the NFSL and its backers tried to convince journalists that it had a force of thousands poised for action²⁸ and was inspiring rebellion in cities across Libya.²⁹ But one journalist described as "unimpressive" Margariaf's photographs "of about 100 rebels training in desert camps."³⁰ And there was reportedly an attempt to recruit Western mercenaries from an office set up in Kinshasa, Zaire.³¹

After Habre's defeat, the French news agency said the NLA had recently laid mines and staged some attacks in southern Libya,³² although the usual propaganda effort does not seem to have been made in conjunction with such exercises.

According to Africa Confidential, the NLA was also intended for use against Sudan and other countries.³³ Soon after Idriss Deby entered Ndjamena, he shut down an office of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) near Ndjamena airport. The office had previously been described as a US-Chadian operation.³⁴

Just as the secret war against Nicaragua affected all of Central America, the war against Libya involved other countries in the region. Israel took advantage of its close ties with Cameroon's intelligence organizations³⁵ and sent instructors to run NLA training centers near Kaele, in the north of the Cameroon and at Djoum in the south. The US is reported to have run a major supply base at Yoko, in central Cameroon.³⁶

An Israeli base at Ndele in northern Central African Republic was reportedly used to train 30 Libyans, including 18 pilots, in airborne operations. Gabon took 37 of the Libyans to train at the presidential guard training camp at Wonga-Wongue, south of Libreville.³⁷

Chad, of course, was the main base for the operation, much as Honduras had served in the war against Nicaragua. The Reagan administration's very first covert operation under CIA Director William Casey was to provide paramilitary support to Hisssein Habre in his fight to unseat the government of Goukouni Oueddei (GUNT), wrote Bob Woodward in his book *Veil*. Some members of the House Intelligence Oversight Committee believed Casey's Chadian operation was aimed at overthrowing Kadafy, who backed Goukouni.³⁸ Habre had been Goukouni's defense minister until 1980.

After Habre fought his way back to power in 1982, the CIA set up a "security- and intelligence-assistance" operation to -

buttress him.³⁹ Although France, the former colonial power, which had also backed Habre, was the paramount external power in Chad, the CIA and Israel trained Habre's secret police, the DDS and his presidential guard, the SP. Some of the training was reportedly carried out at Kamina and Kota-Koli bases in Zaire.⁴⁰ Habre reportedly hired former US marines and Israelis as bodyguards.⁴¹ The US also set up a top secret base 56 miles north of Ndjamena that gave it the ability to provide air cover as far away as the contested Aouzou Strip.⁴²

Across from the Ndjamena offices of the US Agency for International Development was a torture center run by Habre's DDS. Gali Gata Ngothe, a minister in the new Deby government and a former inmate of the facility, told journalists that prisoners, crammed about 80 to a cell, died of suffocation "if they didn't die of torture."

He described one torture, Arbatach. in which Habre's men

forced prisoners to drink "enormous amounts of water... Then they tied their arms and legs together and hoisted them from a tree in the yard. Very high. Then they would just let the rope go. People died of choking or they broke their necks."43

Amnesty International (AI) charged that the SP executed more than 3 00 political prisoners shortly before Habre fled to Cameroon.44 In 1989 AI reported that numerous political prisoners had "disappeared" during "secret detention" and that others had been killed after their arrest.45

After the contra operation was exposed, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen tried to present it as a Chadian effort. The Libyans, he said "actually joined a military force working with the government of Chad." When pressed to confirm reports that US instructors were training them to fight Libya, Cohen said:

I can't talk about our relationship with them. As you know we had a military defense relationship with the Chadian military just as the French did. And as these people were an adjunct of the Chadian military we obviously worked with them as well. I think that to the best of my knowledge these folks never actually went into combat in Libya. They were always kept in reserve by the Habre government.46

In 1989 Africa Confidential reported that the "nerve center" of the anti-Libyan operation was in suburban Ndjamena in a villa belonging to the head of Chad's DDS, and "staffed by US personnel." According to the London newsletter, Chadians trained in the US - including some that took a seven-month course at Camp Hall in Leadville, Colorado in 1988 - were also involved in training the NLA.47 .

Unlike his mostly underfed countrymen, the exiled Hisssein Habre will not starve. Before Habre fled, "he sucked the treasury of almost everything," a French official said.48 An official at Chad's Washington embassy said the government has established a commission to investigate Habre's dealings. President Idriss Deby has charged that the new government has evidence to back his charges that Habre "set up a drugs laboratory and an international trafficking network." Deby also said that a factory forging CFA francs, the French-backed currency used in Chad and a number of other African countries, had been uncovered.49

Habre's family is said to have bought two houses in Denver.50 His aides said he wanted to go into exile in the US, but US officials denied receiving a formal request.51 Senegal has taken him in.

Even before the NLA venture, The French, who have

consistently sought to normalize Libya's situation, envisaging Tripoli as a reliable trading partner and a member of the emerging Maghrebian economic bloc, had not been happy with the US presence in Chad. In 1983 President Ronald Reagan hectored France to send troops to counter Libyan-GUNT advances in the north of the country. Then the administration fought a French-Libyan pact to end the conflict, leading France to charge that the US was so intent on isolating Libya that it appeared to oppose a peaceful solution to the Chadian conflict.⁵² Meanwhile, Reagan officials deliberately embarrassed France, by publicizing the fact that its mutually arranged troop withdrawal had resulted in the lingering presence of Libyan troops in Chad.⁵³

Israel - it had sent Habre military advisers⁵⁴ - encouraged Habre to reject a negotiated settlement proposed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1983 and to try instead to recapture territory then occupied by Libyan and GUNT forces.⁵⁵ In 1987 it was Washington which pressed Chad's claim to Aouzou while France was seeking negotiations to clarify the strip's colonial-era borders.⁵⁶ And it was Washington which encouraged Habre to reoccupy territory south of the Aouzou Strip, which the Chadians eventually accomplished with their highly successful "Toyota warfare."⁵⁷

Last year, France became increasingly irritated with Habre's "blatant playing-off of French against US interests"⁵⁸ and began urging him to make concessions to Libya so that Libyan-Chadian relations could be normalized.⁵⁹ Negotiations got under way, but[^] they always seemed to wilt at the point of breakthrough.

Officially, France insisted it had neither helped nor hindered Deby.⁶⁰ It had simply followed its new policy *

established early in the year when civil disturbances shook Gabon and Cote d'Ivoire, two of its former colonies, employing its troops only to protect French interests. According to one report, "French intelligence services in close collaboration with their Libyan counterparts, [had] for several months been preparing the arrival in power of Idriss Deby."⁶¹ In the late summer France and Libya were also reportedly increasing economic and political cooperation.⁶²

With the bases it built for the contra war against Libya, the US might have mobilized help for Habre after France turned dowy last fall. But it did not. Knowledgeable sources on pitoj/Hill agreed, when asked, that it was quite likely that th[^]Btosh administration had offered not to frustrate France's t5lrjectives in exchange for French cooperation in the US-led "coalition" against Iraq. As the MPS consolidated its hold on Ndjamena, the US embassy in Ndjamena said it had been assured by France that Deby was "not a Libyan agent."⁶³ Although once described as "deeply anti-Libyan,"⁶⁴ Deby has left no doubt that he intends to have the good relations with Libya that geography

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dictates.

Among Libya's many reasons for wanting an end to Habre and the contra force he was nurturing was the need to satisfy the demands of relatives of the POWs in Chad to get their loved ones home. Libya had sought to include their return in negotiations over the Aouzou Strip and had enlisted a number of international figures in a vigorous campaign for their return.⁶⁵

Idriss Deby had been Habre's liaison with the NFSL. When he fled Chad in April 1989, convinced that Habre was about to turn against him, Deby provided Kadafy with intelligence on the organization (and also on the SPLA office in Ndjamená). In return, he received some weapons.⁶⁶ The MPS seized 60% of their weapons from Habre's forces, maintained French Defense Minister Jean-Pierre Chevenement.⁶⁷

US officials tried to remove the Libyans discreetly. Africa Confidential reported that on November 30 the CIA evacuated 100 Libyan contras, among them Khalifa Haftar, the turncoat commander.⁶⁸ But several days after Deby's arrival in Ndjamená, journalists got wind of the operation. They were promptly barred from the NLA camp and the airport.⁶⁹

Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen insisted that the departing Libyans had "been observed and supervised by the [ICRC]. Nobody who wanted to stay was forced to go."⁷⁰

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However, in Geneva, where it has its headquarters, the ICRC.v said that when its representative went to witness the loading of - about 200 Libyans onto a US Air Force C-141 Starlifter transport plane on December 7, two burly US "diplomats" kept him with them ' in a locked car and refused his requests to interview the prisoners and to have a list of their names. The following day the ICRC representative eluded his chauffeurs but was blocked from approaching the aircraft, which was taking on another 400 or so Libyans. When he tried to talk to them through a megaphone, the pilot revved up the motors. He was told there was a need for haste and a danger of Libyan rocket attacks.⁷¹

Getting the Libyan contras out of Chad was hardly the end of Washington's problems. Libya raised hell, demanding an emergency UN Security Council meeting to deal with the Bush administration's "piracy."⁷² And President Idriss Deby's attempt to finesse the issue was at best half-hearted: "We believe that you know something about these prisoners and these opponents. I do not know what country has been training them and arming them." Deby explained that Chad did not "want to have problems with any country at all." Then, he added: "Is there anybody behind these prisoners? Can you imagine that I do not know?"⁷³ (A month later, the Chadian government protested the removal of the Libyans, saying it hadn't been consulted.⁷⁴)

The covert warriors had trouble finding a place to dispose of their army. Nigeria, the contras' first stop, was embarrassed.⁷⁵ After the Libyan foreign minister flew in for a meeting with President Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria said they would leave as soon as possible.⁷⁶

The next stop was Zaire. When it became known that that was the contras destination, there was speculation that they would be used in the CIA's Zaire-based war against Angola. Angola's news agency said that ten of the Libyans had been at Kisagi since December 12 giving intensive military training to Unita.⁷⁷ (This was denied by Unita's US-funded clandestine radio.⁷⁸) Those ten might have been among those the US reportedly evacuated November

30.

But that does not seem to be what happened to the bulk of the NLA, which was not transported to Zaire until December 15 or later.⁷⁹ According to one report, Libya requested that the contras be taken to Zaire. And President Mobutu Sese Sekou said that the "mercenaries" would be given a choice about returning to Libya.⁸⁰ Zaire also is reported to have refused to permit the fleeing Hissein Habre's plane to land.⁸¹

On December 12 the Libyan foreign minister had gone to Zaire and offered Mobutu regular supplies of oil with the first payments not due until 1992.⁸² According to the Spanish news agency, Libya offered \$1 billion for oil and Zaire's balance of payments deficit.⁸³ Mobutu turned a deaf ear to Hissein Habre's attempt to negotiate a safe haven for the POWs. On December 19, "hundreds" of the Libyans were reported to be at the Kitona military base near Zaire's Atlantic coast.⁸⁵

What was it like for the covert warmakers and their Israeli partners to pack it all in and evacuate Chad? Grim, undoubtedly, for these men who have seldom tasted the bitterness they have so liberally dealt out. Not good advertising either: potential hosts will be wary of welcoming a proven jinx; potential mercenaries will think twice. Of course, in Washington, where the war against Libya was all but unknown, they should have no problem getting approval for their next project.

NOTES:

1. The New York Times on December 1, 1990, noted "about 200 Americans, including a dozen US military personnel who are training the Government's army." These might actually have been military instructors. As seen below, the US operation in Chad

and in neighboring countries was far too much for 12 men to handle.

2. MPS is the French acronym for Mouvement patriotique du salut.

3. Africa Confidential. January 6, 1990.

4. Libya; Steps to Freedom. Extracts from Newsletters published by the National Front for the Salvation of Libya: 1982-1987, 1987, pp. 129-132. There is no place of publication given for this glossy paperback, only a postal address: "Al-Inqad-323 S. Franklin Box A-246, Chicago, Illinois 60606-7093, USA")

5. Daily Telegraph (London), May 19, 1989, FBIS-NES.

6. New York Times. June 21, 1987.

7. Ibid., August 9, 1987.

8. Bob Woodward, Veil. Simon & Schuster, New York, 1987, p. 95.

9. Ibid., 183-186 describes the hoax.

10. Mark Tessler, "Libya in the Maghreb," in Lemarchand, op. cit., pp. 77 and 81. (The Moroccan aid ended when Libya and Morocco signed a unity pact in 1984.)

11. New York Times. June 8, 1989.

12. Guardian (London), December 10, 1990.

13. Africa Confidential. January 6, 1989. -

14. Los Angeles Times. February 16, 1989.

15. Africa Confidential. December 7, 1990, which says this arrangement ended when Iraq annexed Kuwait in August.

16. AFP, 1117 UCT, December 3, 1990, FBIS-AFR. which says some of them also had "deformed wrists;" New York Times. December 6, 1990 has a picture of the just-released prisoners.

17. Africa Confidential. December 15, 1989.

18. Wire Services compiled by Newsgrid, a CompuServe data base,

December 14, 1990. The commission said it sent delegates to investigate the condition of the Libyans last August but that

they were expelled by the Chadian government.

19. Africa Confidential. December 21, 1990.

20. AFP, cited by AP, December 8, 1990.

21. Middle East International (London), December 21, 1990.
 22. AP, December 10, 1990.
 23. Africa Confidential. January 6, 1989. According to Rene Lemarchand ("The Case of Chad," in Lemarchand, op. cit., p. 106) the abandoned weapons were worth \$1 billion.
 24. Africa Analysis. (London) October 2, 1987.
 25. Libya: Steps to Freedom, op. cit., pp. 233-236.
 26. Ibid., 79-83; Daily Telegraph, op. cit.
 27. Woodward, Veil, p. 3 67.
 28. Ibid.
 29. Los Angeles Times. February 16, 1989.
 30. Daily Telegraph, op. cit.
 31. Africa Confidential. January 6, 1989.
 32. AFP, cited by AP, December 7, 1990.
 33. Africa Confidential. December 21, 1990.
 34. Ibid., July 7 and 28, 1989; Guardian (London), December 8, v 1990; Africa Analysis. December 14, 1990.
 35. Intelligence Newsletter. November 30, 1988 and September 13; ^ 1989. See also, Israeli Foreign Affairs. October 1986, July 1987, January and July 1989, March 1990.
 36. Africa Confidential. January 6, 1989.
 37. Ibid., January 6, 1989.
 38. Woodward, Veil. pp. 97, 157-8. "Egypt, and, quite likely, Saudi Arabia" also contributed money and arms to Habre, according to William J. Foltz, "Libya's Military Power," in Rene Lemarchand, ed., The Green and the Black. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988, p. 64. GUNT is the French acronym for Gouvernement d'Union Nationale Transitoire.
 39. Woodward, Veil. p. 310.
 40. Africa Confidential. January 6, 1989 and September 14, 1990. DDS is the French acronym for Direction de la Documentation et de la S  curite; SP is the acronym for Sdcurite Pr  sidentielle.
- Kamina is the base the CIA uses for supporting Unita, the anti-

Angolan guerrillas led by Jonas Savixnbi. Ndjamenena Domestic Service reported training at the Kotakoli [Zaire Special Commando Unit] training center (1845 UCT, May 26, 1984, FBIS-MEA.)

41. Africa Confidential. December 7, 1990.

42. Ibid., March 3, 1989.

43. Guardian (London), December 7, 1990. In its December 13, 1990 weekly update (11/49/90) Amnesty International said that prisoners were tortured there, in a converted swimming pool. A BBC reporter who toured the center said "What we saw was beyond belief. There was the torturers' slab and the electric chair.

There were the tape recorders, clubs and truncheons..." Ngothe told this reporter that Habre personally directed some interrogations at the center - including his - by walkie-talkie. cf. BBC Focus on Africa. 1615 UCT, December 6, 1990,

FBIS-AFR.

44. Amnesty International, op. cit.

45. Le Monde. May 24, 1989.

46. BBC Twenty-four Hours. 0517 UCT, December 9, 1990.

47. Africa Confidential. January 6, 1989.

48. Former French army chief of staff Gen. Jeannou Lacaze, quoted by New York Times (News of the Week in Review), December 16, 1990.

49. Le Figaro (Paris) Interview with Idriss Deby, December 18, - 1990, FBIS-AFR.

50. Africa Confidential. December 7, 1990.

51. Los Angeles Times. December 8, 1990.

52. Wire Services, Oakland Tribune. November 21, 1984.

53. New York Times. November 17, 1984.

54. Ibid., August 24, 1983.

55. L'Express (Paris), October 7, 1983.

56. Los Angeles Times. August 11, 1987; Christian Science Monitor August 17, 1987.

57. Foltz, op. cit., p. 65.

58. West Africa. September 11-17, 1989; Africa Confidential. July 7, 1989.

59. Africa Analysis. April 20, 1990. France signaled a turnaround on Libya in 1989, when it recommenced arms sales to Libya, cf.

New York Times. July 2, 1989. It incurred Washington's wrath when it approved the sale of three Mirage-III aircraft soon after, cf. Le Monde. November 19-20, 1989, and then temporarily froze their delivery, cf. New York Times December 15, 1989.

60. AFP, 0217 UCT, December 4, 1990, FBIS-AFR.

61. Intelligence Newsletter (Paris), December 19, 1990, which says that a radio specialist from the French DGSE had accompanied Deby during the march to Ndjamena.

62. Africa International (Paris) October 1990.

63. Reuters, Jerusalem Post. December 3, 1990.

64. Africa Analysis. April 20, 1990.

65. Africa International. May 1990, October 1990; West Africa. August 6-12, 1990; Africa Confidential. December 7, 1990.

66. Africa Confidential. July 7 and 28, 1989, December 21, 1990.

67. AP, December 4, 1990.

68. Africa Confidential. December 21, 1990.

69. New York Times. December 9, 1990.

70. BBC Twenty-four Hours, op. cit.

71. Middle East International, op. cit.

72. Los Angeles Times. December 11, 1990.

73. Press conference aired by Ndjamena Domestic Service, 1913 UCT, December 8, 1990, FBIS-AFR.

74. Radio France International, 1623 UCT, January 4, 1991.

75. Guardian (London), December 10, 1990.

76. Voice of America, 1614 UCT, December 10, 1990. West Africa reported in its December 17-23, 1990 issue that "Libya has hinted that the US fooled Nigeria into accepting the evacuees as bona fide refugees."

77. Ancrop Bulletin. December 19, 1990.

78. Voice of Resistance of the Black Cockerel, 0530 UCT, December 21, 1990, FBIS-AFR.

79. UPI, December 14, 1990.

80. AFP, cited by Guardian (London), December 15, 1990.

81. BBC African News, 0434 UCT, December 12, 1990.

82.-;UPI, December~IT7~~19SrDv

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>84. Los Angeles Times. December 8,_____1990.

85. UPI, December 14, 1990; EFE, December 19, 1990,

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Libyan rebels start
Wild Geese chase

Simon Tisdall in Washington

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THE US-funded, not-so-
popular front for the lib-
eration of Libya has
finally been disbanded,
apparently without firing a
shot, amid embarrassment in
Washington about a covert
operation which turned into
a pan-African package tour.

The would-be Libyan guer-
rillas, formerly soldiers in
Colonel Muammar Gadafy's
army, were recruited by US
operatives after surrender-
ing to Chadian forces in 1988
during fighting between the
two countries. According to

reports published yesterday, 600 PoWs were invited to form an anti-Gadafy force.

US advisers, assumed to be CIA and Special Forces, trained the newly converted freedom-fighters at a base near the Chadian capital, N'Djamena. Things began to go wrong last year when a pro-Libyan government took power in Chad.

Col Gadafy demanded that the Libyan commandos be sent home, for a. spot of re-education if nothing else.

American transport planes removed the do-nothing dissidents to Zaire, presumably to keep them out of harm's way. But they found Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko in less than welcoming mood.

The New York Times reported that Mr Mobutu was angry Congress had blocked a \$4 million (£2.2 million) military aid package because of Zaire's patchy

human rights record. Under pressure from Col Gadafy's claims that the US had kidnapped the desert contras, he allowed Libyan officials to interview them. About 250 agreed to go home. Nothing has been heard of them since.

The dwindling band of 350 men, by this time disarmed and disheartened, were shipped by their US patrons to Kenya. In return for granting them asylum, President Daniel arap Moi secured the release of \$5 million (£2.7 million) in US military aid to Kenya, the New York Times said. The money had been

withheld last year, again because of concern about Kenya's human rights record. The State Department linked the aid to a perceived improvement in conditions in Kenya, but officials were quoted yesterday as saying it was in fact a gesture of gratitude to Mr Moi.

"We compromised our human rights policy in Kenya somewhat but we felt we had little choice," the Times quoted a senior State Department official.

According to the reports, the lost liberators of Libya have now been permanently disbanded and remain stranded in Kenya, for the most part afraid to go home and unwelcome elsewhere. Admitting that the covert operation had not worked out to plan, a Pentagon official commented ruefully: "They are hot potatoes. Everything has gone to hell in a hand basket, and we got stuck holding the basket."