



ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL FOR OPERATIONS
LE SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL ADJOINT POUR LES OPÉRATIONS

12 August 2011

OPS(2011)0521

Dear Mr. Simon,

The following is a reply to your letter of 4 August, addressed to the Secretary General. Many thanks for your request for information about a recent NATO air attack against three satellite transmission dishes of Libyan state TV.

Let me begin by emphasising the high respect we have for the media. We maintain close cooperation with journalists reporting on the ground in Libya, both international and Libyan media.

As you will appreciate, NATO's operations under UNSC Resolution 1973 for the protection of civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack, are carried out with the utmost diligence to avoid any civilian casualties and collateral damage. Let me also underscore the care taken by NATO forces under Operation Unified Protector to ensure that all their actions are in full conformity with international law.

The NATO military authorities have already released public information regarding the specific attack on selected facilities of Libyan state TV on 30 July. They have explained that the decision to target three satellite dishes used for the broadcasting of Libyan state TV was taken on the basis that the facilities were used by the Gadhafi regime to incite to acts of violence and to call for attacks against civilians and were therefore a legitimate military object. The aim was not to destroy Libya's TV network as a whole but to neutralize the elements that were used to threaten the Libyan population.

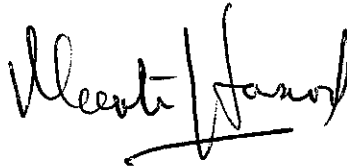
Extensive monitoring of Libyan TV broadcasting was a key element that led to this decision. In the assessment of the operational commander, several Gadhafi speeches broadcast through the targeted installation clearly called for the conduct of acts of violence against the population in Libya. The increased frequency of such speeches and their inflammatory content – notably including those broadcast on July 1, 8, 14, 21, and 28 – prompted the operational commander to take this action. The attack was carried out in full conformity with applicable provisions of international humanitarian law, and was fully consistent with UNSC Resolution 1738. The commander made a conscious effort to only remove these dishes, without destroying the entire broadcast network or its infrastructure, which will be an important capability for the country to have in the future. Public imagery of this strike shows that while the dishes were destroyed, there was very little damage to the surrounding area. Indeed, following this attack, there has been no independent evidence of the alleged deaths or injuries of civilians in the attack.

More broadly, NATO will continue to fulfil its mandate under UNSC Resolution 1973 with respect to the protection of civilians. Future targets will continue to be carefully selected on the basis of whether they are being used to attack or threaten attacks on the Libyan population.

To summarise, I'd like to reinforce that we do not target civilians or any journalists. The 30 July strikes were against equipment only – equipment that Gadhafi had been using as a weapon of war to threaten or encourage attacks. We have no evidence that anyone in the precision strikes were injured.

I trust these clarifications will help your organization better understand the context of NATO's action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin Howard", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martin Howard

Mr. Joel Simon
Executive Director
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