

Press conference by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen after the working lunch of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs with Libya partners NATO 14 April 2011 (...)
)ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN (Secretary General of NATO): Good afternoon. NATO Foreign Ministers and contributing partners met today to discuss the crisis in Libya at a key point in our mission.

It has been a very positive discussion and a clear expression of unity of purpose and resolve. Today we have agreed on a joint statement, which clearly lays out the military objectives of our mission in Libya which can be recapitulated in three points.

We are committed to provide all necessary forces and maximum operational flexibility within our mandate. A high operational tempo against legitimate targets will be maintained and we will exert this pressure as long as necessary and until the following objectives are achieved.

- all attacks and threats of attack against civilians and civilian populated areas have ended
- the regime has verifiably withdrawn to bases all military forces, including snipers, mercenaries and other paramilitary forces, including from all populated areas they have forcibly entered, occupied or besieged throughout all of Libya
- the regime must permit immediate, full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all the people in Libya in need of assistance

This is a very clear statement and let me remind you: there are 34 countries involved in this operation. This shows our strong and shared commitment to fulfil our UN mandate and protect the people of Libya.

All of us agree: we have a **responsibility to protect**

Libyan civilians against a brutal dictator. The United Nations gave a clear mandate to do it. The people of Libya desperately need it. And we are determined to do it. Because we will not stand idly by and watch a discredited regime attack its own people with tanks, rockets and snipers.

And let me be very clear, in its historic resolution, the United Nations Security Council called on the world community to do whatever it takes to protect civilians in Libya. And that is what we are doing. Day by day, and strike by strike, we will continue to counter the brutal and systematic attacks against civilians. Our mission is to protect. We will do what it takes to fulfill that mission.

And this is not just in words, but in deeds. Since NATO took over this operation, our aircraft have flown over 2,000 missions, 900 of them strike sorties. We have destroyed tanks, armoured vehicles, ammunition depots and air defences. Yesterday, we continued to strike bunkers, rocket launchers and radar systems in key areas, including near Misrata and outside Tripoli.

The Contact Group which held its first meeting yesterday in Doha, welcomed NATO's command and control of military operations. I know that questions have been raised whether we have a

sufficient number of military assets and capabilities to accomplish this mission. (...)

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