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## The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

March 10, 2011

**Briefing by National Security Advisor Tom Donilon and Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes on Libya and the Middle East**

Via Conference Call

2:48 P.M. EST

MR. VIETOR: Thank you very much, everybody, for getting on. We appreciate you taking the time. Today we have the President's National Security Advisor Tom Donilon and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes, who are here to talk a little bit about Libya and take some questions from you.

So with that, I'll turn it over to Tom.

MR. DONILON: All set? Thank you, Tommy. And thanks, everybody, for taking the time this afternoon. We thought it would be a useful exercise to spend some time this afternoon not just talking about Libya, which I'm prepared to do, and Ben is as well, but also to talk about how we're thinking about the broader set of events in the Middle East.

And we do view them as a broad set of events. Indeed, it's hard to overstate the significance of the change, the historic change that is sweeping the region. And we are engaged, as I know many of you know, in efforts really across the region, from Tunisia all the way to obviously our ongoing efforts in Iraq.

And I thought what I'd do at the outset here is lay down several principles that inform our approach and have informed our approach from the outset. I'll then talk about a couple of specifics. I also want to talk about an issue that we haven't spent a lot of time talking to you all about in recent days, which is Iran. I have a couple of things to say on that. And then I'd be glad to take your questions.

First, with respect to our overall approach, essentially how we think about this and how we're approaching the challenges, and let me make a couple of observations.

First, the turmoil in the region, the events in the region, present challenges as well as historic opportunities for the United States and for the people of the region. These are indigenous movements, first and foremost, and they do offer an opportunity to transform the narrative that defined the Arab world for decades. Democratic movements that have emerged can also counter and are countering, I think, the extremist narrative of violent political change that al Qaeda and affiliated groups, as well as Iranian exported violent revolution that have -- are seen as narratives in the region.

This is a strong counter-narrative. This is really an important point I think. These are indigenous movements. They are movements by people seeking more representative and responsive government. They run quite counter to the narratives of al Qaeda and the Iranian narrative -- and I'll talk about that in a minute. These really are movements that are tremendous examples of people pursuing their aspirations in a non-violent fashion. And it's a critically important point.

As I said, there's enormous opportunities in this current situation. And as you all know, I am charged day in and day out to plan to avoid ranges of possible negative outcomes in situations, but I think we also have to prepare to take advantage of the profound movement here and really not be paralyzed in any way by the potential downsides, but really be prepared to embrace the positive upsides of what's going on in the region.

Second, our efforts are based on a set of key principles that the President articulated from the outset. One, we oppose violence and repression. Two, we work in the approach to this situation from the perspective of a set of universal values that the President articulated quite clearly. And three, we support a process of political change that opens up societies and leads to governments that are more responsive to the

aspirations of the people of the region.

Third, we strongly support reform as the basis for stability in the region. We support peaceful and meaningful democratic transitions throughout the region. In particular, we support the right to free expression, political participation, confidence in the rule of law, and governments that are transparent and responsive and accountable to their people. We believe that such reform is the basis for stability in the region.

Next, it's not only political reform that's important here -- and I want to make this point very strongly -- it's also the economic change and economic reform, and we are very, very focused on this. It is key to the success of these transitions to representative and responsive government. We are very tightly focused on a range of efforts here to promote economic change and economic reform through our own bilateral assistance efforts, by leveraging our leadership in the international financial institutions that are focused on this -- on reform in the region, and, frankly, through our efforts with wealthier nations in the region who also need to work with us and work with their fellow nations in the region in order not to miss this opportunity.

This is a very important piece of what's going on here. And indeed, that will be an important focus of Secretary Clinton's trip to the region next week, where she'll be in Tunisia and in Egypt.

Before getting into specifics, I wanted to talk about Egypt as part of talking about the entire sweep of things that we're looking at here. While I'm sure on this call we'll spend a lot of time talking about Libya, and that's important and we're tightly focused on that, but we also are focused on the broad sweep of events in the region, including major events where Egypt really is at the center.

The success of the democratic transformation underway in Egypt is absolutely critical. It's the largest Arab country. It is, again, at the center of events in the region and is a very tight and important focus for us, which is why, of course, Secretary Clinton will be going there next week as the highest ranking United States official to visit Egypt since President Mubarak left office.

Along those lines, I spoke to Field Marshal Tantawi the day before yesterday, and I wanted to talk about that for a couple of minutes because I do think it's important. I

thanked Marshal Tantawi for his leadership of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces, and communicated to him that the world continues to admire the Egyptian people's transition to a democratic government; reiterated our commitment to partnership with Egypt in this project and in helping the Egyptian people achieve a successful transition.

I spent time discussing a number of steps that the Supreme Council of Armed Forces had taken, including continuing to allow Egyptians freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, putting in place a process for the constitutional amendments to be voted on by the Egyptian people, and pursuing reforms responsive to the aspirations of the Egyptian people.

I noted the fact that Field Marshal Tantawi made a number of difficult changes in the cabinet and appointed a new Prime Minister Sharaf; encouraged him to continue to lay the foundation for free, fair, credible elections; protect universal rights of the Egyptian people; and pursue a transparent dialogue with the broadest possible range of Egyptian civil society. And I thanked him for the government of Egypt's assistance in helping address the humanitarian situation in Libya -- where we've been working with them. And of course, as many of you know, we also -- we're directly involved in the transportation through the establishment of an air bridge from the Libyan-Tunisian border back to Egypt for many Egyptians who had been in Libya and were trapped at the border.

On Libya. Let me go through three or four things that constitute an integrated, comprehensive strategy that we've had in place. And our government has been focused on this as an all of government -- all of government effort, again, in an integrated way as part of our overall effort in the region.

The President has made it crystal-clear that Qaddafi has lost legitimacy to lead, he's lost the confidence of his people and should leave. He's sent a powerful signal I think that history is not on Qaddafi's side and he isolated. And let me go through six or seven points very quickly with respect to our overall effort because it does constitute I think, as I said, a comprehensive strategy aimed at the goal of seeing Qaddafi leave office and having the Libyan people move to a transition.

First, we did work to ensure that the international community spoke with one voice

on this, the United States, the Europeans, the U.N., the Arab League, African Union and others deliver a clear message. This has not just been the West engaged in isolation of Colonel Qaddafi. It has been a broad range of countries. And I think that's critically important as we go forward here. He really is an isolated person now in Tripoli.

Second, we've imposed strong sanctions. We moved quickly, indeed before the United Nations Security Council resolution was passed on Saturday, the 26th -- we moved on Friday, the 25th -- to impose very tough sanctions, including the freezing of over \$32 billion of the Qaddafi regime's assets through our own unilateral sanctions. We moved that evening at 8:00 p.m. that night. We had a principals committee meeting that day that I chaired; we worked through a number of these issues.

We were concerned because we knew that the \$30 billion was in an account that could be frozen by the United States and we moved at 8:00 p.m. that evening to ensure that the Qaddafi regime did not undertake any steps to get their hands on the assets.

We've coordinated additional sanctions with our European partners and they have enhanced those sanctions just in the last day or so. And you've seen announcements from Lady Ashton. We've worked with the United Nations on a very tough set of sanctions, and we are expanding our own designations and sanctions to include more members of the Qaddafi regime.

This \$32 billion really does constitute essentially assets held in escrow by the United States for the future of Libya. And as a new government, more representative government, emerges in Libya, ultimately this will be an very important corpus of assets to give the new Libyan leadership a leg up on its task forward.

Third, the President made clear we're taking steps to ensure that members of the Qaddafi regime are held accountable. This is very important. The United Nations Security Council resolution that was passed on -- I think I've got this right -- the 26th of February referred the Qaddafi regime to the International Criminal Court. And we are going to be expanding these designations along the way, including using our intelligence assets to monitor Libyan activities.

As the President said the other day, those individuals around Qaddafi who are

taking orders from Qaddafi and executing his plans need to think very carefully about this. They need to think about what they're doing to their fellow citizens and they need to think about what the consequences are. Walking away now versus participating is the difference between the international community pursuing them to justice, and all the way, and a different future.

Fourth, we have been in direct contact with the opposition through a variety of channels in an intensive way and we've been tracking these contacts through a matrix that we've been running here at the White House -- been in direct contact with a variety of channels. This includes, by the way, senior members of the Council and other individuals within Libya. We're coordinating directly with them to provide assistance and determine the best ways we can support their aspirations and understand their leadership structures and their intention. We want to hear from them about the situation on the ground, what their plans are, what their recommendations are.

As I've said, we've been in close contact with these opposition representatives. As Secretary Clinton said today in her testimony -- where was it, Tommy? In the House -- House Appropriations today -- that she will meet -- intends to meet with opposition representatives next week. And in addition to that, like I said, there are meetings outside Libya -- we're prepared to send diplomats to Benghazi to engage the opposition inside Libya. This will be helpful to our understanding of the situation on the ground, allow us to facilitate humanitarian assistance.

And to that end I also thought it would be useful for you to know that we'll soon be sending disaster assistance relief teams into eastern Libya and we have for some time been funding about a dozen NGOs and international organizations who are actively assisting folks in the eastern part of the country.

Now, Secretary Clinton also said today and I want to underscore that we're suspending Libya's embassy in the United States. We're not accepting Qaddafi's representatives in Washington.

Over time, of course, this will really squeeze and tighten the containment effort around Qaddafi, encourage and provide incentives for those members of the Libyan government to disassociate themselves from Qaddafi, as I said earlier, and again, underscoring that before someone carries out an attack on Libyan civilians they need

to know they face a sharp choice and they need to know they'll be on the wrong side of history and we will ensure they face the consequences.

Fifth, we're providing assistance to support humanitarian needs of the Libyan people and those leaving Libya. We have helped to repatriate a number of individuals who have been displaced including, as I said earlier, through the use of the air bridge to Egypt. We're providing assistance directly to the people in eastern Libya through the NGOs, as I said, and they're operating on the ground. As I said, we're going to send in our DART team.

And sixth and finally in this presentation, we're pursuing a range of military options. We called this week's meetings at NATO. Our ambassador, Ivo Daalder, briefed you earlier on a number of things that we had put on the table going forward here. And today Secretary General Rasmussen announced a number of steps that the Alliance is taking: Increase maritime assets in the central Mediterranean; defense ministers also agreed to move ahead with detailed operational planning on two really important projects I think -- humanitarian relief and more active enforcement of the arms embargo; continuing plans for the full range of possibilities and planning -- full range of possibilities including a no-fly zone. These plans will be presented next week at NATO.

And as I've briefed earlier in the week, I would also remind -- earlier this week NATO agreed to put AWACs up over the Mediterranean 24/7 to expand surveillance and coordination.

Defense ministers agreed that any military action by NATO to respond to a demonstrable need had a sound legal basis. And we do seek regional support. This is really important. And it's not just regional rhetorical support. We're going to be seeking actual support by those nations -- the Arab League, the GCC and the African nations -- to participate in any of these efforts as they go forward. Again, not just rhetorical support, but actual participation -- which we think is absolutely critical for a variety of reasons that most of you can certainly understand and we can talk about in detail if you want.

Finally, European Council leaders are meeting tomorrow in Libya and we'll work closely with the EU -- and I've been in touch with many of my European colleagues during the course of today to ensure the closest possible coordination between NATO

and the EU so we can maximize efficiency.

Beyond this, we're exploring additional sanctions by the United Nations Security Council resolution that will permit more active steps. As we develop scenarios, as we develop planning in response to the situation on the ground, if we need additional United Nations Security Council authorities we will go get that.

So, in sum, we've isolated Qaddafi, denied him resources, ensuring accountability, building and maintaining international support, building capabilities to assist the Libyan people. It's a fluid situation. It's not going to be resolved overnight. But I think looking at our efforts here -- and we obviously have an investment -- we've acted quite swiftly and steadily to ramp up our efforts here in Libya, as we have across the region.

One more topic and then I'll take questions -- on Iran. And the reason I wanted to raise it is that -- and some of your papers have had these stories about how somehow the changes in the Middle East that we've seen over the last couple of months work to Iran's benefit. This is really an important point to think about.

In sharp contrast to the activities in Tahrir Square in Cairo and throughout the region, Iran has really laid bare its hypocrisy. It applauds universal rights of others in the region but continues to suppress its own people, including mass arrests and killing those who dare speak out against the regime. It's not a surprise from my perspective -- who has been at the forefront of our efforts with respect to trying to deal with the Iranian nuclear program -- that it's trying to divert attention. It's had grave difficulty delivering economic progress. The leadership is out of touch and its narrative of exporting the Islamic revolution has been discredited across the region, as well as within Iran.

Iran is isolated on its nuclear program and support for terrorism. We are continuing to enhance that isolation. And the bottom line is this: The Iranian narrative really does, I think if you do a sharp analysis of this, fall in a quite empty way across the region when compared to the historic changes underway.

So with that, I'd be happy to take your questions.

Q Hi, Mr. Donilon. I wonder if you could give us what information you have on the reported firing by Saudi Arabian police on protesters there, and what kind of

conversations you've had about how the Saudis might deal with future protests.

MR. DONILON: Ben, I've not seen the reports. Have you seen that?

MR. RHODES: Yes. Nick, we're certainly aware of those reports and, again, consistent with the presentation that Tom gave, what we have said to the Saudis and to all the people of the region is that we're going to support a set of universal values in any country in the region. And that includes the right to peaceful assembly, to peaceful protest, to peaceful speech. So, again, that's a message that we've articulated in public and in private to the government of Saudi Arabia and to all the governments of the region.

And we'll of course continue to closely monitor this particular situation, get as many facts as we can about exactly what transpired, since these reports are relatively recent. And again, going forward, though, our message will remain the same as it has been in any country as it relates to the right of people to peaceful protest.

Q Hi, Mr. Donilon. I noticed you didn't speak very specifically about the possibility of military action, and I think some folks might have a bit of a -- taking a somewhat jaundiced view of this might say that there's a lot of activity going on without any sort of specific way to bridge this desire to have Qaddafi removed. Can you just -- I know you've answered this question in various forms from time to time -- but can you just go through the potential set of options that are currently on the table, ranging from the no-fly zone to other -- to humanitarian actions, and just analyze the potential benefits and potential drawbacks?

MR. DONILON: Yes, Glenn, without getting into -- thanks for the question. Without getting into specific military planning, let me make three or four points in response to your good question.

The first is that military steps -- and they can be kinetic and non-kinetic, obviously, the full range -- are not the only method by which we and the international community are pressuring Qaddafi. I think that the really important point I wanted to get across in this presentation, that we have taken a range of steps that I outlined to squeeze Qaddafi, isolate him, really turn him into a pariah. Again, actions not just by the West, but indeed by the entire international community, including a full range of regional actors --

the Arab League, the African Union, GCC.

So I think it really is important in any analysis or writing that's done on this that those steps not be underestimated. These are the initial steps that have been taken. And, by the way, the fact is Qaddafi is isolated, his resources are being impaired. He has, in fact -- through the efforts of the people of Libya, now faces a situation where my rough estimate is that half the population of Libya is no longer under regime control, but rather under the control of areas where the opposition is providing governance. So that's the first point.

Second point, the range of options that are on the table at NATO are the ones that we outlined, and I think they're really important. We have moved in a number of maritime assets, as I said. And this does begin to give -- use the situational awareness and surveillance capabilities that you want going forward.

Second, there are three sets of options that were laid out at NATO for planning. And indeed, the idea here is that should the international community want to move here, if the United Nations passed an empowering resolution that, in fact, these assets -- which are substantial and have command and control aspects that are very important - - we'd be prepared to go.

And the three that were outlined here are important. It is humanitarian assistance, which could be by air or could be by sea. And indeed, there are ports obviously where such humanitarian assistance could be delivered, like Benghazi. And, again, it would have to be worked out with the opposition groups that control various aspects in the east, but they could also be air provisions of non-lethal humanitarian relief.

Third, NATO is uniquely positioned to enforce the United Nations Security Council arms embargo, and that's another piece of it. Now, you can go down a full range of issues beyond that, steps beyond that, that I really don't think I want to do on this call. But it really does all fall into the -- and the no-fly zone, by the way, obviously which has been on the table and planning for which is being done.

Now, you could, and indeed we have, looked at a full range of additional options which fall into various baskets, if you will, that range from additional kinds of supply to the opposition; as we've said, thinking through a no-fly zone proposal and whether or not

that makes sense and it actually is responsive to the challenges; to additional kinds of surveillance going forward.

So I don't think it would be appropriate for me to go through the full range, except to represent to you that the full range has been prepared and assessed by our government. And on the international basis, the range I outlined to you and that Secretary General Rasmussen talked about today have been assessed at NATO.

Now, a couple of further points. International efforts here, international support is important going forward here. There are a number of nations which have interest in what's going on in Libya, in addition to the United States. And it's important in our judgment to have international support moving forward.

Second, that international support I think would be really enhanced -- and the activities that might be undertaken be really enhanced by, as I said earlier, active Arab participation, not just rhetorical support, going forward.

Next, we are engaged, Glenn, directly, as I said, with the opposition groups. Secretary Clinton, as she announced during her House testimony today, is going to be meeting with opposition groups. And we have been for a number of days, maybe longer than that, engaged, talking to opposition groups about what the needs are in the -- of these groups; as I said, what their organization structure, the decision-making structures -- their motivations are, their goals are, going forward. And from that, those sets of encounters, we will be able to, I think -- we and others -- be able to construct in a more informed way the kinds of steps that we might take next.

Thank you.

Q Hi. Thanks very much. Mr. Donilon, can you give a few more details about the aid teams that you mentioned are going into eastern Libya? Will they have military protection? And do you consider this intervention?

MR. DONILON: There was kind of an echo there.

Q I'm sorry. Do you want me to repeat the question?

MR. DONILON: I think I got it. I'd say -- why don't you repeat the question so I make sure I got it.

Q Referring to what you said earlier about aid going into eastern Libya, will those teams have military protection? And if so, do you -- is there any way that this might be construed as military intervention?

MR. DONILON: A couple of points on that. No, these are humanitarian assistance teams. They are not going in, in any way, shape, or form as military operations. They go in with the cooperation of the authorities who are running the operations on the ground in eastern Libya. And it can in no way, shape, or form be seen as military intervention. This is focused on providing the kind of assessment you need to ensure that the most effective humanitarian assistance that can be provided by the United States and by the international community is being delivered.

So to answer your question quite directly: No, not a military operation at all; not going in with military or security personnel; going in working with the permission of and the cooperation of the local entities now who are in de facto control of areas in eastern Libya. And it can in no way be seen as a military intervention. This is purely humanitarian in order for the international community to better assist in a humanitarian way the people of Libya.

MR. RHODES: Jeff, this is Ben Rhodes. I'd just add a couple points to what Tom said there. You have to think about -- that there's several lines of effort on the assistance front. In the first instance, there is the help that we're providing to people who are flowing out of the country. And that includes the air bridge to Egypt. That includes chartering flights for other people to return to their homes. And that includes the money that the President announced has been allotted to support the efforts along the border.

Then there's the assistance being provided to the people of Libya within Libya. Right now as we speak there are already NGOs on the ground in Libya providing assistance to the Libyan people, including NGOs who have the support, financial support, of the U.S. government.

To further support that effort, what we've done is have the capability to pre-position

these DART teams. As you may know, these are teams that are used to dealing in difficult circumstances. They played a big role, for instance, in Haiti in terms of surveilling the needs there and helping to coordinate the assistance. So they're purely civilian humanitarian teams that are accustomed to dealing in difficult, disaster-like situations and circumstances.

They'd of course be operating within areas, as Tom said, that are already under the control of the opposition, no longer under the control of the Qaddafi regime, and therefore we'd be doing this in consultation and coordination with them.

And then lastly, of course, there's the additional prospect of further assistance flowing in to the Libyan people through channels such as the port in Benghazi, which is the type of action that we're talking about with some of our international partners.

MR. DONILON: And you know, Jim -- on that, just one last point because it goes back to Glenn's question as well. As I said, we are in contact with the opposition groups in Libya. There is real sensitivity here about the issue that you raise and it's important sensitivity. This is an indigenous effort. The people of Libya have, against all the predictions that anyone might have made several months ago, again have control over half -- or about half of the country of Libya. And it's absolutely important to recognize the indigenous nature of these efforts and to be responsive to kinds of requests along the humanitarian lines that we are talking about here.

But it's important to be crystal-clear about our answer to your question, which is this is humanitarian, not military. And as you know, there's been real concerns by the -- not just the opposition in Libya, but also other countries in the region about military steps on the ground. Thank you.

Q Tom, if you could comment on DNI Clapper on the Hill today was asked a couple of questions that raised eyebrows, one of which was he said that Libya is a stalemate back and forth, but I think over the longer term the regime will prevail. And then second, he seemed to surprise even Senator Levin by saying that China and Russia, in that order, pose the greatest threat to the United States. And I was just wondering if you could comment.

MR. DONILON: Well, on the -- let me do the Libya-related question. I may ask Ben to

take the China question -- because I did see the DNI's transcript, but I haven't looked at the transcript on the China/Russia thing, Jake, but thank you for your question.

And I guess I would answer it this way: that if you did a static and one-dimensional assessment of just looking at order of battle and mercenaries, you can come to various conclusions about the various advantages that the Qaddafi regime and the opposition have. But our view is, my view is -- as the person who looks at this quite closely every day and advises the President -- is that things in the Middle East right now and things in Libya in particular right now need to be looked at not through a static but a dynamic, and not through a unidimensional but a multidimensional lens.

And if you look at it in that way, beyond a narrow view, on just kind of numbers of weapons and things like that, you get a very different picture. The lost legitimacy matters. The isolation of the region matters. Denying the regime resources matters. And this can affect the sustainability of their efforts over time. Motivation matters. Incentives matter. The people of Libya are determined to effect their future.

And indeed, Jake, if you had looked at this just through a static, unidimensional lens 45 days ago and you and I had been discussing whether or not it was possible that the Qaddafi regime would lose control over half the people in his country, we would say probably not. But change is the order of the day in the Middle East right now. And again, you have to look at things fresh and you have to take into account, as I said, the dynamics as well as the multidimensional nature of it.

The last thing I'll say is, is that a static, unidimensional analysis does not take into account steps that can be taken in cooperation with the opposition going forward here. So I understand how -- I do this every day -- I understand how someone can do a static analysis, order of battle, numbers of weapons and things like that. But I don't think that's the most informative analysis, frankly. I think the analysis needs to be dynamic and it needs to be multidimensional.

So I hope that's responsive. And again, based on that analysis, I think that you could come to different conclusions about how this is going to go forward.

Last on this -- Qaddafi is isolated and the isolation is fairly complete in the world. His resources are being cut off. The international community is engaged in an

increasingly deep way with the opposition. So I would just caution that a dynamic and a multidimensional analysis is more appropriate in the circumstance.

Ben, you may have seen the transcript on the other question.

MR. RHODES: Yes, Jake, I'm familiar with the other question. And again, there I think it is a matter of capability versus intent. Clearly China and Russia do not represent our biggest adversaries in the world today, or the nations that we perceive to pose the greatest threat in terms of their intent to harm U.S. interests. We obviously spend a lot of time focused on, as a non-state actor, al Qaeda, but then nations like North Korea and Iran that pose a challenge to U.S. interests.

In terms of pure capability, obviously China and Russia are nations with large nuclear arsenals and large armies. But we have pursued a policy from the beginning of this administration of building cooperative relationships with the Chinese and the Russians and, frankly, those efforts have yielded concrete benefits that have served U.S. interests as well as Chinese and Russian interests.

So, again, these are two nations that have extraordinary capabilities in the securities here, but they are two nations that we are building cooperative relationships with, whereas when you look at the issue of intent -- again, intent to be an adversary to the United States, that leads you to focus on nations such as North Korea, organizations such as al Qaeda, who again are a great focus of what we do here every day.

MR. DONILON: And, Jake, listening to Ben's comment on that, I mean, again, if you do a static, arithmetic analysis, that can take you to a conclusion, but it really doesn't inform a threat analysis.

And we have from the beginning, as you know, worked very hard on the great power relationships because the platform of a productive, constructive set of great power relationships provide the opportunity for the United States to pursue its interests in the most effective way. And I think the work that we have done building up the relationship with the Russians, across a range of issues that you're intimately familiar with, and with the Chinese -- which is an effort, as you know, I've been deeply involved in -- whereby we tried to build out a productive and constructive relationship -- really do

affect that analysis.

Now, that's not to say -- and again, if you look at our quadrennial defense review, if you look at a number of the core foundational documents about our defense posture, that's not to say that we are in any way not cognizant of various circumstances. But the overall strategic thrust has been to try to build productive and constructive relationships with the great powers as a way to most effectively pursue United States interests.

And indeed, these conversations, we've pursued these great power relationship strategies in a very intensive way, not just through kind of periodic summits every six months or year, but we've had -- now had nine face-to-face meetings with Hu Jintao. Vice President Biden met with Vice President Putin -- Prime Minister Putin today in Moscow as part of our ongoing efforts to work on areas of common concern with the Russians.

Thanks, Jake.

Q Thank you very much. First of all, is the President happy with an intelligence chief who conducts static and one-dimensional analysis? And secondly, you say that this does not take into -- General Clapper's assessment doesn't take into account steps taken with the opposition. I mean, does that mean military steps? Because his analysis would suggest -- and the military dimension is clearly very important when you're clinging onto power -- that they need something to tip the balance. Thank you.

MR. DONILON: On the first question, the President is very happy with the performance of General Clapper and we work together every single day. I was asked a question about the statement, and I think my judgment on the statement is a static analysis and that you need to take into account the dynamics.

On working with the opposition as part of the dynamics analysis, what I said is that it doesn't take into account, kind of looking to the future in the increasing work that the international community is doing with the opposition, beginning now with political support, humanitarian support, and deepening those conversations. I think that's the best answer for that.

MR. RHODES: Yes, and I'd just echo one point that Tom made earlier, which is that if you look at the trajectory of our own efforts with the international community in terms of a steady ramping up of our sanctions, in terms of the introduction of accountability measures, in terms of the provision assistance, and in terms of the consideration of a range of military options, some of which are already in train, those are obviously going to affect the dynamic within Libya.

Similarly, if you look at the trajectory in the region, as Tom said, change has been the order of the day. And I think that any assessment of the situation right now would suggest that history is not on the side of Muammar Qaddafi. History is on the side of the Libyan people, and they're going to be the ones who determine their future.

And so we are very clear in having a policy that recognizes that history is on the side of the Libyan people, and that those who are around Qaddafi, as they make their own calculations, must understand that dynamic within their country and understand that they'll be held accountable if they continue to side with the regime that, again, has been brutalizing its own people.

MR. VIETOR: I think we have time for one last question so this will be our final question.

Q Thank you so much. Getting back to the static analysis, a couple of things. Why would the administration present a static one-dimensional assessment to Congress and the world about something this critical? It seems to me that that undercuts, first of all, the obligation to inform Congress fully, and to present a coherent picture of your assessment to the world. I mean, if Qaddafi is not entrenched and is going -- is not going to succeed, as General Clapper suggested today, said today, then don't you think that that is basically presenting a false intelligence assessment to the public -- intelligence assessment.

Secondly, if you wait for an international consensus -- which is unlikely to come at the U.N. and, therefore, not to come at NATO -- aren't you increasing the likelihood that your pressure, squeezing him through sanctions and other means will not dislodge him?

MR. DONILON: Andrea, on the first question, again, I think that General Clapper

was presenting a kind of a flat-out resources analysis in terms of the regime. And he went through -- if you look at the transcript -- he went through the kind of equipment and resources that the regime has. And I think if you look at it, he said from a standpoint of attrition, if you do an attrition analysis, you get to his conclusion.

I'm talking about looking to the future here, and talking about taking into account various dynamics that I think are in train and could be in train going forward. So, again, if you had sat here and you and I had this conversation 45 days ago, and I had said, my analysis is that Qaddafi would lose half his country by March 10th, we would have said just based on capabilities and numerical arithmetic analysis, that that's highly unlikely.

But the dynamics in the region are just more dynamic -- are just moving faster than that. And there are things underway here across the region that have presented us with circumstances that a year ago, let's say, would not have come to the fore in a conversation that you and I might be having. And I think you'd agree with that, that the changed dynamics in the region have been of a historic nature.

And what's happened, of course, is that people, especially young people -- and it varies from country to country -- have confronted regimes that are not performing for them or that have been repressing them and the fear dynamic has been lost. And when the fear dynamic is lost, the overwhelming force analysis changes pretty dramatically. And we've seen that across the region over the last couple of months.

So that's my response to that. If you ask -- if you just do an intelligence assessment of assets, as I said, a unidimensional assessment of assets, you come to a pretty clear -- you come to a set of conclusions. But I do think it's important -- and we have been obviously closely following these dynamics across the region -- that, in fact, these outcomes are not at all preordained, and there can be, as we talked about in response to an earlier question, there can also be other events and dynamics that intervene.

Now, I went on so long I forgot the second part of your question.

Q Whether if you wait for an international consensus Qaddafi will be completely entrenched. And I guess a subset of that is, is there going to be a move towards doing

what France has done in recognizing the opposition as some sort of provisional government now that you've suspended the embassy here?

MR. DONILON: Taking the question from the back end, a couple of points. Number one, as I said, we've been directly engaged with the opposition groups in learning about the structures that have been emerging, the leadership, who they are, who they represent, and what their goals are. That process has been underway and will be intensified and, indeed, Secretary Clinton will be meeting with representatives of the opposition, as she announced at the hearing today.

Second, as we said earlier in the conversation, we are working directly with, if you will, the de facto group that is running the governmental functions in the eastern part of the country. These are the folks with whom we're talking about assistance efforts. These are the folks who came to Europe in the last couple days and with whom Secretary Clinton will be meeting.

So there has been -- I guess I would -- pushing past kind of the complicated legal analysis around recognition, non-recognition -- would point to the practical engagement in working with these groups as the de facto authorities in parts of Libya where they are in control.

Q Now, on the first part of your -- the second part of your question, I think it's important to build out international support, particularly among the nations in the region as we go forward here, if you're going to undertake some of the options that are on the table. And I think, frankly, if you look at history, that in fact the United States and the international community have moved in a pretty expeditious fashion.

I'm pretty familiar with the history of a number of these things, as you know, and I think the fact is that the United States, the international community has moved in a pretty broad way pretty quickly. And we can, maybe offline, we can go through some of the calendars of prior examples if you wanted to do that.

MR. VIETOR: Thanks, everybody, for getting on and we appreciate your time. And we will send out a transcript as soon as it's ready.

MR. DONILON: Yes, and I really do want to thank everybody for the questions. We wanted to take the opportunity to talk more broadly. And I do think it's -- I really want

to go back to the top of our conversation, which is we are focused on, obviously, issues in Libya given the -- particularly the great humanitarian interests that are at stake there. But we also remain focused on the broad range of challenges here in the region. And it's important from our perspective, for the White House and the administration to be doing that, given the stakes, because there really is a tremendous opportunity in the region, and it's important for us not to -- we'll obviously deal with the crisis of the day, but not to lose sight of the fact that there are very big changes underway in places like Egypt, which really can make a -- really will make a historic difference depending on the direction in which they go.

You all have been terrific. I really appreciate it. Look forward to talking to you again. Thank you.

END

3:36 P.M. EST

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