

Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR

Protection of civilians and civilian populated areas



On 31 March, NATO took sole command of international air operations over Libya under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. The aim of NATO's actions is to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas from attack or the threat of attack.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 mandates "all necessary measures" to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack. In line with this authorisation, NATO conducts reconnaissance, surveillance and information-gathering operations to identify those forces which present a threat to civilians and civilian-populated areas. Acting on this information, NATO air and maritime assets can engage targets on the ground or in the air.

Since taking the lead in military operations, NATO has maintained a high pace of operations. In the first week of Alliance action, NATO and partner aircraft conducted over 1,000 sorties, including nearly 400 strike sorties, to enforce the no-fly zone and arms embargo and strike at forces that attacked or threatened to attack the civilian population.

Targeting depends on the decisions of operational commanders. Targets struck to date have included tanks, armoured personnel carriers, air-defence systems and artillery around and approaching key civilian areas such as Misrata and Brega.

NATO makes every effort to prevent harm to the civilian population and is always guided by the principle of using the minimum necessary force.

NATO does not have forces on the ground. UNSCR 1973 forbids an occupation force and NATO abides by that.

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