

Note from AFA President -- Libya, op-eds

AFA members, Congressional staff members, civic leaders, DOCA members, last week a reporter asked me whether Airpower could be effective in Libya operating at 30,000 feet. His implication was that it took risk-taking to adequately perform the mission of protecting civilians in Libya. My answer was simply to question why he thought projecting vulnerability would make it easier to accomplish the mission – especially given the accuracy of weapons. Why would we want to give away "not being seen?" Then, I proceeded to tell him some/all the things that were going on above 30,000 feet that had been basically ignored by the press (list is not inclusive):

- AWACs was flying off shore and providing an air picture to commanders and to crews of aircraft enforcing the No Fly Zone (NFZ)
- RC-135 Rivet Joint aircraft were providing intelligence to commanders on the situation on the ground
- JSTARS was keeping track of objects on the ground and feeding that intelligence to the command chain
- Tankers built the air bridge and were providing fuel to fighters, bombers, and airlifters going to and from the AOR/Libya.
- Other ISR assets – probably Global Hawk/U2s – were providing near-real time intelligence to commanders
- AF Space Command most prominently "honed" its GPS satellite constellation to provide increased accuracy for GPS-guided weapons
- Space assets were tasked for key mission data – intelligence/communications to support the operation
- Operators of Remotely Piloted Aircraft flew their aircraft using satellite links in a reach-back operations.

And there were others (such as EC-130 Volant Solo aircraft [probably a bit below 30,000] broadcast in FM, AM, HF and TV bands to provide the Libyan people with the truth about what was going on).

The reporter was a bit surprised. Why hasn't DOD told us about all of this he asked? My response: Why haven't you asked?

Secondly, there have been a number of interesting op-eds this past week:

- In this one from the NY Times, David Sanger makes the key point that the most important threat to the Middle East is Iran ... and we had better not take our eye off the ball:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/03/weekinreview/03sanger.html?src=twrhp>
- From the Washington Post, this one on Iraq [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/time-runs-out-in-iraq/2011/04/01/AFwwJGQC_story.html] points out we need to make some serious preparations before we leave the country.
- From the Financial Times, Mike Jackson makes the point that military intervention alone, though, is unlikely to achieve stability in Libya. Force is necessary, but it is not sufficient to bring about the political solution that conflict – itself an inherently political state – requires. The link is here:
<http://www.afa.org/EdOp/2011/MALybia.asp>
- Again from the NY Times, Roger Cohen makes the point contained in the title of the piece: Be Ruthless or Stay Out. You can find the piece at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/opinion/18iht-edcohen18.html>

For your consideration.

Mike

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