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Op Ellamy update – second half August 2011

OPERATION Ellamy is the UK's contribution to NATO forces enforcing UN Resolution 1973 to protect civilians in Libya. Elements of the RAF carry out patrols and strikes from bases in Malta and Italy. The Royal Navy is patrolling in the Mediterranean.

August 29

Royal Air Force Tornado and Typhoon aircraft on an armed reconnaissance patrol located an ammunition lorry near to the heavily damaged central ordnance depot at Waddan, in central Libya.

A Brimstone missile destroyed the vehicle. In the course of the evening, a further RAF patrol successfully targeted three buildings near Bani Walid, 100 miles south east of Tripoli, which NATO surveillance analysis had shown were in use by Qadhafi's forces for command and control purposes and ammunition storage; Paveway precision guided bombs destroyed all three.

HMS Liverpool remains on patrol off Tripoli, helping to ensure the safety of vitally needed humanitarian shipping movements into the port.

August 28

Royal Air Force Tornado GR4s spotted some of Colonel Qadhafi's artillery in action near As Sidrah, to the west of Ras Lanuf.

A combination of Paveway guided bombs and Brimstone missiles enabled our aircraft to destroy a BM-21 Grad multiple rocket launcher, a heavy artillery piece in a gun emplacement, and a pick-up truck armed with a heavy weapon.

RAF VC10 and Tristar tankers, and Sentry and Sentinel surveillance aircraft provided essential support to these and other NATO combat patrols.

August 27

An armed reconnaissance patrol over Tripoli by RAF Tornado and Typhoon aircraft was tasked by NATO to prosecute a FROG 7 ballistic missile launch vehicle.

This had been spotted in the hands of Qadhafi's forces near the former regime's rocket artillery depot south of the capital, at Bin Ghashir, near to the international airport.

A long range, if not very accurate, heavy artillery rocket, the weapon represented a significant potential threat to the population of Tripoli. Our aircraft successfully engaged the missile launcher with a Paveway guided bomb.

At sea, the Royal Navy continued to support NATO's maritime operations, conducting vital surveillance tasks off the Libyan coast.

August 26

Royal Air Force aircraft conducted a precision attack on a brigade headquarters and helicopter facility located on the southern outskirts of Tripoli, a few miles north-east of the international airport.

A number of military targets within the site were destroyed by Paveway guided bombs. Also during the afternoon, a NATO reconnaissance patrol off to the east spotted one of Qadhafi's BM-21 Grad rocket launchers firing from a position to the west of the port of Ras Lanuf, and called in an RAF Tornado which was able to destroy it with Brimstone missiles.

August 25

Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft located and destroyed one of Colonel Qadhafi's few remaining

long range surface to air missile systems, near Al Watiyah, close to the Tunisian border.

During the afternoon, Tornados and Typhoons destroyed a command and control node that remained in former regime hands on the road south from Tripoli to the International Airport.

Then, at around midnight, a formation of Tornado GR4s, which had launched from RAF Marham in Norfolk on a long range strike mission, fired a salvo of Storm Shadow precision guided missiles against a large headquarters bunker in Qadhafi's home town of Sirte.

As ever, these missions, and those conducted by allied fast jets over Libya, relied upon NATO's large fleet of combat support aircraft, including RAF VC10 and Tristar tankers, plus Sentry and Sentinel surveillance platforms.

August 18

Royal Air Force patrols successfully attacked two staging areas used by Qadhafi's forces at Zlitan, as well as a mobile radar system positioned nearby at Al Khums. In the course of the afternoon, further armed reconnaissance patrols conducted precision strikes on a total of three locations in and around Az Zawiyah.

Fleet Air Arm Sea Kings from HMS Ocean, equipped with the very capable Searchwater radar, supplemented NATO's fixed wing surveillance capabilities.

August 19

Three formations of RAF aircraft mounted a coordinated strike on a group of warehouses at the site of the Central Organization for Electronic Research in Tripoli.

The main buildings of the COER, a long-standing cover organisation for Libyan intelligence activities including the development of weapons of mass destruction prior to 2003, were destroyed by an RAF attack on 24 July.

However, NATO surveillance demonstrated that the adjoining warehouses remained in use as an intelligence command and control node.

One main battle tank, spotted by our aircraft in the vicinity of Tripoli, was also targeted successfully.

During the evening, two more formations of RAF Tornado and Typhoon aircraft returned to Tripoli. Their target was the main operations room for the Ministry of Interior's security forces, which NATO intelligence had identified as located in a compound in the Abu Salim district. Eight Paveway guided bombs scored direct hits.

August 17

The early hours saw another military command node in Zlitan destroyed, and armed reconnaissance patrols in the west of the country near Tripoli and Az Zawiyah.

These conducted precision strikes on former regime facilities at Sabratah, including a commando base which had been used by Colonel Qadhafi's men to launch numerous reprisals against the local people.

The base suffered severe damage and it is reported that it is now in the hands of the Free Libyan Forces and permanently removed as a threat to the safety of the town's population.

In the late afternoon, a further RAF patrol identified a force of pro-Qadhafi troops which had been fighting at the oil refinery on the coast at Az Zawiyah. The armed vehicles on which they had relied to mount their attacks had been taken out of action by a NATO strike, but they were observed to use a tug boat, which had been commandeered as a naval patrol craft, in an attempt to redeploy to new positions along the coast.

Since it was clear from their actions that these troops continued to pose a threat to the local population, the RAF patrol engaged the ship. Although a challenging target, small and under way at sea, a direct hit was scored with a laser guided Paveway bomb which sank the vessel. This is a tribute to the professionalism of the aircrew in tracking a moving target with the laser designator, and the accuracy of the weapon system.

RAF VC10 and Tristar tankers, and Sentry and Sentinel surveillance aircraft, provided extensive support to these and other NATO missions. Since the start of military operations on 19 March, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Army Air Corps precision strikes have damaged or destroyed some 870 former regime targets which posed a threat to the Libyan people.

Colonel Qadhafi is reportedly claiming that NATO has attacked the historic remains of the ancient city of Leptis Magna. The MoD issued a statement to say this was nonsense.

The UK and its allies are very well aware of the UNESCO World Heritage site and take every precaution to avoid damage. The RAF did attack, in the early hours of

August 16

During the past two days, Royal Air Force were again in action over Libya, including a major strike on one of the former regime's main command facilities, a decisive blow against Qadhafi's troops terrorising the population of Sabratha, and the destruction of a force attempting to redeploy by sea.

RAF aircraft destroyed a military staging post near Zlitan with a pair of Paveway guided bombs. During the evening, two formations of Tornados and Typhoons took part with allied aircraft from several other nations in a coordinated and highly accurate strike by NATO on a large command compound at Hun in central Libya, used by former regime leaders to coordinate attacks on the Libyan people. Eleven Paveway bombs were dropped by our aircraft on military targets within the compound including the central headquarters facility.

August 16

The Royal Navy was in action off Zlitan, while Royal Air Force aircraft took action against Colonel Qadhafi's rocket launchers in the town.

In the early hours, Royal Air Force Tornado GR4s successfully attacked a psychological warfare facility used by the former regime at Zlitan. Throughout the rest of the day, RAF patrols focused their efforts on prosecuting Qadhafi's rocket artillery in and around Zlitan, destroying a support base used by the rocket units, as

well as two of the Grad launch vehicles.

During the evening, as HMS Liverpool closed with the shore to conduct a naval gunfire mission against former regime positions near Zlitan, she was fired upon, inaccurately, by Qadhafi's troops.

She returned fire with her 4.5" gun, and RAF aircraft providing overwatch were able to locate and destroy the rocket battery responsible for the attack.