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Exactly Who Are the ‘Rebels?’
And What Are Their Plans for a Post-Gaddafi Libya?

Statement at Congressional Hearing on Libya
Foreign Affairs Committee
Africa Subcommittee Chairman Chris Smith (NJ-04)
March 31, 2011

Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for holding this hearing at this critical time.

Madam Chair, I am once again grateful to U.S. military personnel and their coalition counterparts for the courage, professionalism, and tenacity they have exhibited in executing their orders to implement UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. While our forces have heroically taken on yet another combat mission in the Near East, and performed extremely well, I am nevertheless, deeply concerned about our use of force in Libya, and more particularly, about the path this Administration took to bring us to this point. Moreover, to some extent recent statements by the Administration raise more questions than they’ve answered.

For example:

- When we first initiated military action, did the Administration know who the leaders of the rebel forces were? What were their aspirations, and how closely were they in concert with our interests?
- Why did the President, at one point, say that all options were on the table, and then later publicly state that the United States would not send in ground troops? Doesn’t this tip our hand and aid Gaddafi, now that he knows the limits of what we’re willing to do?
- Given Gaddafi’s past actions in support of international terrorism, what is Gaddafi’s current ability to strike at our interests outside of Libya? Doesn’t his ability to use asymmetric means to hit back at us increase the longer he remains in power?

- Given the dramatic swings we've seen between the rebels and Gahdafi's forces, the current situation still seems quite volatile and could go either way. A critical factor in past military actions has been the weather. Given the unpredictability of weather conditions in that part of the world, might it become necessary at some point for us to send in ground troops to keep Gahdafi from overrunning the rebels?

These are just some of the questions I have, and I look forward to getting answers from our witnesses today.

Thank you, Madam Chair.