

By Caroline Cameron, Great North News Services

The UK Armed Forces continue to be in action over Libya as part of NATO's Operation Unified Protector, to protect Libyan civilians under threat of attack and enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973.

Tornado cleared to take ASRAAM on Libya sorties

TORNADO GR4 aircraft flying missions over Libya are now cleared to use the Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile (ASRAAM), it has been reported. The missile is a high speed, high agility infra-red guided missile which improves the self defence capability of the aircraft against more hostile air threats.

New Libya costs to be met by the Reserve

NET additional costs of operations over Libya will be met from the Reserve, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has confirmed. Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey told the Commons it is too early to give a robust estimate of costs for the imposition of the no-fly zone. However, RAF sources indicate that a long wrangle with the Treasury could be necessary before a final settlement is reached. It is not yet known if the Reserves will meet the cost of replacement of munitions on a like-for-like basis, and how quickly the cash would be made available to the RAF to replenish war stocks in the event of a lengthy campaign.

More than 300 targets damaged or destroyed since start of operations

It was confirmed that Royal Navy and Royal Air Force precision attacks have damaged or destroyed over 300 regime targets since the start of operations.

Meanwhile, NATO aircraft have flown more than 6,000 sorties, nearly half of them strike sorties, since NATO assumed command of Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR on 31 March 2011. The NATO campaign headquarters is in Northern Italy, the RAF is flying from bases in southern Italy, Sicily and the UK sovereign base in Cyprus.

May 14 - Armoured vehicle centre hit by RAF near Tripoli

Royal Air Force ground attack aircraft joined other NATO aircraft in a strike on a major armoured vehicle repair facility near Tripoli. They also continued their patrols over Misratah, targeting Colonel Qadhafi's forces who continue to pose a threat to the civilian population there, and destroyed an artillery piece south of the city the following day.

May 12 - RAF Typhoon keeps up pressure on Qadhafi regime

A Royal Air Force Typhoon aircraft destroyed Libyan self propelled artillery with an Enhanced

Paveway II bomb. The aircraft, which Defence Analysis recently reported costs £40,000 a Typhoon flight hour, struck the two Palmaria self propelled guns in an attack near Qadhafi's home town of Sirte.

Images from the Typhoon's Litening III targeting pod confirmed that the targets were destroyed. This ISTAR capability is considered by the RAF to be a key enabler. Much of the targetting of mobile formations is done by Sentinel aircraft patrols from Cyprus. Defence Analysis also reported that to maintain a 24/7 CAP over Libya for two Typhoons, including tanker and AWACS support, costs some £5m a day.

May 12 - HMS Liverpool sees off Qadhafi's boats

At sea, the destroyer HMS Liverpool, whilst engaged on surveillance operations off the Libyan coast, was tasked with other NATO warships to intercept small high speed inflatable craft spotted approaching the port of Misratah; similar boats have previously been used by the regime to attempt to mine the harbour. The regime artillery on the coast fired an inaccurate salvo of rockets at Liverpool, whereupon she immediately returned fire with her 4.5" gun, which silenced the shore battery. As a result of the action by HMS Liverpool and the other NATO warships, Colonel Qadhafi's boats abandoned their operation.

May 11 - Two separate strikes attack mobile radar systems

RAF aircraft successfully attacked a total of five mobile radar systems and one surface to air missile launcher in two separate strikes near Tripoli and Sirte.

May 10 - Large military vehicle depot severely damaged near Tripoli

UK aircraft attacked a surface to air missile system and anti-aircraft artillery near Bani Walid, before causing severe damage to a large military vehicle depot near Tripoli, using GPS guided Paveway bombs to hit the target despite cloud cover.

May 9 - Misratah patrol damages/destroys multiple regime targets

Tornado and Typhoon ground attack aircraft from the Royal Air Force patrolled over the besieged city of Misratah and attacked a number of regime targets in the area, damaging or destroying two mobile radar systems, two multiple rocket launchers and a main battle tank. The dual mode seeker Brimstone missile is an ultra-precise weapon which as a consequence of small collateral damage can be used in urban areas.

May 6/7/8 - Weekend attacks hit several regime targets

Royal Air Force aircraft successfully engaged three vehicles on Friday, May 6, and on Saturday destroyed a pair of armoured personnel carriers near Brega. On Sunday, Tornados and Typhoons destroyed a main battle tank west of Brega and two multiple rocket launchers involved in the attacks on Misratah. They also destroyed four buildings being used by Col

Qadhafi's forces located near Misratah, Yafran and Maradah.

May 5 - Royal Navy clears mines from Libyan harbour

HMS Brocklesby, one of the Royal Navy's Mine Counter-Measures Vessels, destroyed a mine laid by pro-Qadhafi forces in the port of Mistrata on the Libyan coast. Using her sonar and Under Water Mine Disposal System, Seafox, HMS Brocklesby successfully located and destroyed a buoyant mine just one mile from the entrance to the harbour.

May 5 - Equipment life extensions set to cost around £4.6m

In response to the conflict in Libya, a single Nimrod R1 surveillance aircraft, two C-130K Hercules transport aircraft and the Type 22 Frigate HMS Cumberland had their service lives extended

Contractual negotiations for the Nimrod R1's extension have not yet been completed, but the anticipated cost is likely to be around £4m.

And the cost of extending the C-130s and HMS Cumberland is anticipated to be £15,000 and £575,000 respectively.

May 2 - Precision guided ordance attacks around Sirte and Brega

Tornadoes and Typhoons destroyed two armoured personnel carriers and an artillery piece west of Sirte, and two more artillery guns at Brega. These attacks were all conducted using precision guided ordnance.