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Chinese agency views international public opinion criticizing strikes on Libya

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Mar 25, 2011 (BBC Monitoring via COMTEX) -- ["International Observation" column by a Xinhua reporter: "International Public Opinion Queries the Military Action of Striking Libya"]

Beijing, 25 Mar (Xinhua) - The military action of striking Libya launched by France, Britain and the United States has entered the seventh day on 25 March. The military action has evoked strong reaction of the international community. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin even compared it to a "Crusaders' Eastern Expedition" of European and American countries to the Middle East. As the military strikes are being launched in a sustained manner, the perplexity, queries and criticism of the international public opinion have continuously increased.

Thinking That the Military Action Has Gone Beyond the Authorization of the United Nations (subhead)

On 17 March, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973, which decided to protect the Libyan civilians by setting up a no-fly zone and other necessary measures. However, the military action taken by France, Britain and the United States has been extended from setting up a no-fly zone to striking the Libyan ground forces and this has brought the risk of injuring the innocent civilians. A US government official also said without mincing matters that the goal of the United States, France and other countries was to force the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to step down. The public opinion of many countries is generally upset about this.

During a special interview by a Xinhua reporter on 22 March, Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defence and foreign policy studies of the Cato Institute, a US think tank, said, "The military strikes on Libya by the United States and its allies have gone beyond the scope authorized by the United Nations and approved by the League of Arab States. If the United States and its allies openly state that they want to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi, they will go far beyond the UN authorization."

The Russian State Duma passed a statement "On the Situation in Libya" on 23 March, demanding the multinational allied forces cease fire at once. The statement pointed out: The use of force shows clearly that some countries are making use of the UN authorization to attain other goals instead of the proclaimed protection for the civilians.

Turkey, as a NATO member state, has all along opposed the NATO's participation in the military strikes on Libya. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told the US CNN Turk on 22 March: "The UN decision concerned has a clear framework and the NATO's action, which has gone beyond the framework, is illegal."

Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nation Li Baodong said on 24 March that the purpose of the Security Council resolution on Libya was humanitarian protection instead of causing more casualties of the civilians and a more serious humanitarian disaster. He urged all parties concerned to cease fire at once to avoid escalation of the conflict.

At the same time, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Amr Moussa, who once agreed to set up a no-fly zone in Libya, criticized the Western allied forces on 20 March, "What is happening in Libya does not conform with the purpose of implementing a no-fly zone and we hope to protect the civilians instead of bombing more civilians."

Shortly after the air raids began, the African countries clearly stated their position of opposing the Western countries to hastily take a military action in Libya. During his visit to France on 24 March, the African Union Commission Chairman Jean Ping reiterated that the African Union opposed the intervention of foreign troops in the situation of Libya and held that the West had not carried out sufficient consultation with the African Union before taking the military action against Libya.

South African President Jacob Zuma said on 21 March that the multinational forces should strictly abide by the UN Security Council Resolution concerned and immediately stop military strikes on Libya and injuring the civilians. No country should occupy Libya or any other sovereign country.

The website of the British newspaper "The Guardian" published a report, saying that the international community had universally held that these military operations were inappropriate. They not only had paid no attention to the lives of the civilians, but also had long ago gone beyond the plan for setting up a no-fly zone in Libya.

Indian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on 20 March saying that India was seriously concerned about the sustained violent conflict and the increasingly deteriorating humanitarian crisis and expressed its regret over the air strikes on Libya launched by foreign troops. India held that any measure taken towards the situation in Libya should be conducive to alleviating the crisis instead of deteriorating the people's situation.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin recently strongly criticized the military strikes on Libya launched by the Western countries. He said, "All these operations have been carried out in the disguise of protecting the civilians. Is there any justifiable reason for them? Is there any conscience for doing so? There is no justifiable reason or conscience." "They have reminded me of the medieval Crusaders' Eastern Expedition in Europe."

Criticizing That the Countries Initiating the Military Strikes Harbour Ulterior Motives (subhead)

This time, France, Britain and the United States vehemently called for using military means to prevent the occurrence of a "humanitarian disaster" in Libya, but the public opinion held that the leaders of the governments of these countries had their respective considerations over internal affairs and foreign affairs.

This time, France took the lead in initiating military strikes on Libya. Regarding this, the European and American public opinion held that the major goal of French President Nicolas Sarkozy lied in maintaining the international influence and interests of France, especially those in the Mediterranean region. Besides, if the allied forces scored victory, he would gain chips for his reelection.

US "Los Angeles Times" held that: "Because his support rate has reached the lowest point in history and he is faced with the general election next year, French President Nicolas Sarkozy desperately needs raising his political position." "However, as far as Nicolas Sarkozy is concerned, Libya has provided an opportunity for him." The newspaper also pointed out: Libya is adjacent to four French-speaking countries and its oil is extremely important to Europe. Therefore, France has important geographical and strategic interests in Libya.

Speaking about the motives of Britain's active participation in the military strikes, British "Financial Times" said that the Cameron administration was engaged in political betting in a bid to establish the diplomatic assets of the Conservative Party and to display its diplomatic skills.

In the beginning, the US Government took a pessimistic attitude towards military intervention in Libya, but later, it tried hard to enable the UN Security Council to pass the bill on the setting up of a no-fly zone in Libya. On the one hand, the United States is reluctant to be involved in another war since it has not yet extricated itself from the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War; but on the other hand, the United States is playing an actual "leading role" in the military action this time.

Regarding the reasons behind the scenes for the US Government's Libya policy, Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defence and foreign policy studies of the Cato Institute, pointed out: In addition to the factor of the pressure of its foreign allies, the dual pressure at home has also caused Barack Obama to finally make his decision, that is, the pressure of the demand for intervention in Libya of the new conservatives and "liberals" in the United States. Besides, the latter are an important part of Barack Obama's domestic political base. "The combination of these factors have made it impossible to continue to resist."

In analysing the purpose of the United States in finally deciding to carry out military intervention in Libya and in being determined to overthrow the Gaddafi regime, well-known US columnist Fareed Zakaria pointed out: If Muammar Gaddafi "escapes from the disaster," it will affect the advance of the US strategy in the Middle East and "this will be a galling shame and humiliation to Washington." "Therefore, the United States must now make persistent efforts to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi."

Spain's "Uprising" held that there were important economic and political factors for the military intervention in Libya launched by the Western countries. It pointed out that the purpose of the West in openly supporting the domestic rebel forces in Libya by means of military and diplomatic actions was not only to overthrow the Libyan leader, but also to isolate Iran and remove the obstacles to the strategy of capturing the entire Islamic market.

British newspaper "The Guardian" said that the military intervention in Libya by Britain, France and other countries had been more and more criticized by the international community. A latest opinion poll showed that like the sceptical attitude of most British people towards the motive of their government, many countries round the world also held that the action taken by the West was extremely risky and was out of selfishness and that the Western countries said one thing but meant something different.

Being Worried That the Consequences of the Military Action Are Unpredictable (subhead)

It has been nearly one week since the Western multinational allied forces began their military action against Libya. However, the international public opinion is worried that this may only be the beginning and the air strikes may be prolonged ones. No matter whether it is viewed from the consequences brought by the military action to Libya or from the direction of the development of the war and the enormous spending, Libya may become another quagmire bogging the West down.

The website of the US "New York Times" published an article on 23 March, saying: "Two kinds of situation will probably appear in the military intervention this time: the intervention will prove to be futile and the participating countries will be utterly disheartened; or with the escalation of the action, the enormous spending and the colossal scale of the input of military strength will exceed the expectation or imagination of the participating countries."

The AP said: "Barack Obama's policy is triggering more and more worries and criticisms of members of the two parties in the Congress. Even a portion of the Democrats and the moderate faction of the Republicans, who usually support Barack Obama on military issues, have become more and more worried that Libya, whose terrain is similar to that of Iraq, but which is four times bigger, may become a military quagmire."

Quite a few European and American experts have expressed their doubt about whether or not it is possible for the West to achieve the goal of overthrowing the Gaddafi regime by depending on air raids alone. Howard McKeon, chairman of the Armed Services Committee of the US

House of Representatives, said, "History has proved that air power alone is insufficient to drive the enemies out of the trenches." He called the Obama administration's Libya policy a "deadlock strategy."

In addition to the political responsibility, the enormous military spending needed for the military action against Libya has also caused a severe headache to the participating countries. An analyst said the spending on the first day of the operation of the United States and the multinational forces already far exceeded \$100 million. The longer the strikes will be, the higher the spending will be.

Rym Ayadi, senior research fellow for the Middle East Prospects Project of the Centre for European Policy Studies, held that under the multiple impacts of the economic, financial and debt crises, the economic situation of Europe brooked no optimism and given the enormous spending on the military action, the governments of various European countries were compelled to take into account the situation of their respective budgets.

At the same time, the chaotic situation in Libya may also provide space for the activities of terrorists. Algerian Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci said on 24 March that the military intervention in Libya of foreign countries had paralysed the central government and the proliferation of a large quantity of weapons had provided opportunities for terrorists to take advantage of. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also held that the deterioration of the situation in Libya might lead to the escalation of international terrorism.

During an interview by Xinhua, Jan Egeland, director of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, said that after the military intervention of the West, the worst situation that might appear in Libya was a civil war leading to the formation of separate governments. A separated Libya in a protracted civil war would be a very bad ending.

Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defence and foreign policy studies of the Cato Institute, held that both the downfall of the Gaddafi regime and a separated Libya might drag the United States into "a protracted civil war and the knotty process of the reconstruction of the country."

Turkey Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on 22 March that history had proved that military intervention in Libya might produce a reverse effect. Similar military actions not only were futile, but also aggravated the situation of casualties and finally were turned into an invasion damaging the unification of those countries."

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