

Criticizing NATO Today: Neocons, Liberal Bloggers, Putin

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NATO is now bombing [government centers](#) in Libya--a move that's not without its critics. Officially, [The New York Times](#) reports, NATO is directing airstrikes against "palaces, headquarters, communications centers and other prominent institutions" with the aim of protecting civilians, but to a lot of onlookers it looks like an attempt to target Muammar Qaddafi directly. The campaign has drawn disapproval from a number of quarters:

Justin Logan, a blogger at the libertarian Cato Institute, thinks [it's time we called a war a war](#). "Washington is simultaneously using the military to attack 'institutions supporting the Libyan government' in order to 'weaken Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's grip on power,'" Logan writes, "but our official position is that doing so is unrelated to our policy objective of getting Qaddafi out of power. Does the administration really think we're that stupid?" He's echoed by the left-leaning military blogger Jason Sigger, who simply [notes](#), "Hi, mission creep. Good to see you again."

On the other hand, as The Nation's Robert Dreyfuss points out in a useful roundup, there are plenty of "hawks and neoconservatives" who argue that the latest NATO strikes [don't go far enough](#). Lorne Gunter at Canada's National Post makes a [representative case](#): "Despite the latest aerial attack on Gaddafi's vast residence... there is no sign of Col. Gaddafi going away soon," Gunter writes. "Absent willingness to risk ground troops, there is little Western nations can do to push out a distant dictator who doesn't want to go."

Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin disapproves of the whole thing, in case anyone's interested. The Russian Prime Minister made some [colorful comments](#) today in Denmark, marveling that "they said they didn't want to kill Gaddafi. Now some officials say, yes, we are trying to kill Gaddafi ... Who permitted this, was there any trial? Who took on the right to execute this man, no matter who he is?" Putin also asked, rhetorically, "Why strike palaces? What, are they exterminating mice this way?" We're reminded of last month, when Putin likened the [UN resolution against Libya](#) to "[medieval calls for crusades](#)"--he seems to be at pains to show Qaddafi's got a friend in Moscow.

