

NATO No-Fly Zone over Libya

Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR

As of 25 March 2011 NATO is leading the No-Fly Zone operation over Libya, as part of Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR, the Alliance's response to United Nations Security Resolution (UNSCR) 1973.

This is part of NATO's contribution to the broad international effort to protect the Libyan people from their own government's violence.

The No-Fly Zone operation, like any other NATO operation, is under the political authority of the North Atlantic Council. NATO Joint Forces Command Naples commands the operation, alongside the arms embargo operation that is also part of Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR.

Under the command of JFC Naples, air operations are managed from NATO's Air Command Headquarters for Southern Europe, in Izmir, Turkey. Real-time tactical control is exercised by NATO's Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) in Poggio Renatico, in Northern Italy.

The purpose of the operation is to fulfill UNSCR 1973's call to close Libya's entire airspace to all flights except humanitarian ones and therefore prevent any air assets from attacking civilians.

As NATO's No-Fly Zone operation conducts missions over Libya, the coalition operation continues to put pressure on those forces which are attacking civilians. The information sharing between the coalition and NATO that has existed since the crisis began ensures that both operations complement each other.

As part of the operation, naval vessels and surveillance aircraft, including NATO's AWACS, provide real-time monitoring and coordination of air activity over the Libyan airspace. They are also responsible for detecting any aircraft that enters the No-Fly Zone without prior authorisation.

NATO fighter planes stand ready to intercept any aircraft which violates the No-Fly Zone, and engage it if it presents a threat. In enforcing the No-Fly Zone, force will only be used as a last resort. As is standard in military operations, NATO's fighters have the right to self-defence against attacks from the air or the ground.

Allies have already pledged significant numbers of ships and aircraft to the operation, with more contributions expected to be made as force generation progresses. The majority of these assets can be used for both the No-Fly Zone and the arms embargo operations, giving the commander the greatest possible flexibility.

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