

US ASSASSINATES SAIF QADDAFI AND THREE QADDAFI GRANDSONS

[Update caveat: As i mentioned in comments, there is no independent confirmation other than the Libya press release/announcement that either Saif or children truly were killed. Many on the ground in Libya are skeptical that it is a stunt. That is certainly possible; however, that is a ruse that would be exposed you would think, so it would not seem to make for a promising stunt. It is possible though.]

Fresh off the BBC wire:

A Nato air strike in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, has killed the son of the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi, a government spokesman has said.

Colonel Gaddafi himself was in the large residential villa which was hit by the strike, the spokesman added, but he was unharmed.

His son Saif al-Arab was killed, as well as three of his grandsons.

Journalists say the building was extensively damaged and one unexploded bomb remains at the site.

Government spokesman Moussa Ibrahim said the villa was attacked "with full power."

NBC's Richard Engel reports the "images look like NATO used bunker busters on compound".

That is some "no fly zone" that is being enforced; apparently civilians, women and children (Saif Qaddafi and Qaddafi grandchildren) on the ground are considered legitimate targets. Mr. Obama and his White House have spoken out of both sides of their

mouths as to whether “regime change” was their goal. Defense Secretary Gates has admitted that Libya did not pose any “actual or imminent threat” to the US. Mr. Obama has refused to characterize the Libyan intervention as a war even though it obviously is. The US is, just as obviously, the lead actor despite the faux NATO patina and gloss put on the pig.

So, is this type of action, full frontal force against the head of state and his family permitted under the UN resolution or the US guidance? Well, the operative UN provision is UNSCR 1973 . The OLC authorizing memo text is here.

Quite frankly it is hard to find any legal basis under either UN or US authorizations for the action that has been consummated today. Section 4 of UNSCR 1973 does authorize a broad range of force to “protect civilians and civilian populated areas”; however, it is hard to see the moral, ethical or legal justification for today’s acts in that. It seems all the more tenuous coming directly on the heels of Qaddafi’s plea for a ceasefire.

As Jeremy Scahill stated,

Killing a dictator’s innocent grandchildren really showcases our moral superiority.

No kidding. But what the heck, maybe Obama can cut a few more drone killing jokes tonight at the White House Correspondents Dinner nerdprom. He seems to really like that kind of humor.