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SPECIAL ON LIBYA

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ONE) - **AFRICAN UNION PRESIDENT CALLS FOR CEASEFIRE**

Le président en exercice de l'Union africaine (UA), le président équato-guinéen Teodoro Obiang Nguema, a appelé "tous les acteurs à travailler ensemble pour faciliter l'arrêt des hostilités" en Libye, dans un communiqué parvenu mercredi à l'AFP à Libreville. Le président Obiang Nguema "exhorte tous les acteurs concernés à travailler ensemble pour faciliter la concrétisation de l'arrêt des hostilités, de manière à assurer la protection effective des populations civiles et à créer des conditions favorables pour un dialogue entre les parties libyennes sur les réformes nécessaires pour s'attaquer aux causes de la crise actuelle", selon le texte. M. Obiang se "félicite" aussi des conclusions de la réunion du comité de l'UA sur la Libye, à Nouakchott, le 19 mars 2011, qui réunissait les présidents sud-africain Jacob Zuma, mauritanien Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, congolais Denis Sassou Nguesso, malien Amadou Toumani Touré, ougandais Yoweri Museveni, ainsi que le président de la Commission de l'UA le Gabonais Jean Ping. "Ces conclusions constituent une base viable pour la recherche d'une solution rapide et pacifique à la crise actuelle en Libye, prenant dûment en compte les aspirations légitimes du peuple libyen à la démocratie et aux réformes politiques", a affirmé M. Obiang. Le comité de l'UA a appelé dimanche à "la cessation immédiate de toutes les hostilités", au lendemain de frappes aériennes lancées par une coalition internationale en vertu d'une résolution du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU destinée à protéger les civils libyens. Selon Reporters sans frontières, la radio et la télévision équato-guinéennes n'ont pas le droit d'évoquer les troubles en Afrique du Nord et au Moyen-Orient "par crainte de voir poindre en Guinée équatoriale un mouvement de contestation similaire à celui du nord de l'Afrique". Le Comité pour la protection des journalistes a condamné début mars la censure exercée par les autorités équato-guinéennes. Un journaliste de la Radio télévision nationale de Guinée équatoriale, Juan Pedro Mendene, a été suspendu pour avoir fait une allusion à la Libye dans une émission. Le ministre de l'Information Jérónimo Osa Osa Ecoro avait justifié cette interdiction faite aux médias par le "devoir de neutralité" du pays. Le président Teodoro Obiang Nguema dirige son pays d'une main de fer depuis un coup d'Etat en 1979. (AFP)

TWO) – **OBAMA STRUGGLES TO CONTAIN LIBYA BACKLASH**

President Barack Obama is struggling to contain a political backlash over the U.S. military role in Libya and is facing sharp questions over how the United States can extract itself from yet another war. The president returns to Washington from Latin America on Wednesday needing to tamp down criticism that has mounted during his absence on a five-day foreign tour that began the day U.S. missiles were sent flying into Libya. Many of the president's fellow Democrats and some Republicans complain they were not properly consulted before the U.S.-led assault began and have questioned the legal basis for the conflict. The lawmakers are demanding answers: What is the precise goal of the mission? How long will it take and how much will it cost? What are the vital U.S. national security interests? "Call this what they will, we are waging war -while still engaged in two

other fronts- which will likely require substantial resources over a long period of time," Representative John Larson, chairman of the Democratic caucus in the House of Representatives, said on CNN.com. "The full Congress should have been more informed and involved in this decision." **EXPENSIVE ADVENTURE** Each of 161 cruise missiles fired into Libya by Tuesday evening cost \$1 million, expensive ordinance to deploy when budget cuts are being negotiated in Washington and Obama is trying to wind down lengthy and costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. "It'll be another disaster. We have to stop spending the treasure of the United States in these military adventures and start taking care of things here at home," liberal Democratic Representative Dennis Kucinich told Fox News. **OBAMA CAUGHT OFF-GUARD** The uproar appears to have caught the administration off guard and with Obama out of position to offer a sustained counter-argument. Obama and his aides have sought to assure Americans the U.S. role will be limited in scope and duration, no ground troops will be deployed, and the United States will transfer its lead role to U.S. allies in a matter of days. But critics question whether the United States can really recede into the background as Obama desires, particularly if Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi remains in power. The U.N. resolution for Libya does not demand he leave, and while Obama has said he wants Gaddafi ousted that is not the ostensible goal of military action. "The president needs to pull together some solution to get us out of this mess," retired General Barry McCaffrey told MSNBC. "What are the political objectives? What are we doing there? What's the endgame?" **LIMITED TIME TO WIN WAR** Americans so far are going along with Obama. Julia Clark, a pollster at the Ipsos polling firm, said her review of recent polling showed about 50 percent of Americans approve of Obama's handling of the situation. "If the intervention is short-lived and especially if it's successful, I think it will be a boon to Obama politically," Clark said. "But if it does become a bit of a quagmire, the financial burden very rapidly will be deemed unacceptable." Americans will be supportive as long as the U.S. role is short, said Democratic strategist Bud Jackson. "Right now most Americans see this as a limited, well-structured effort hopefully to save lives. If this becomes more protracted, I think the Americans' level of anxiety will go up," he said. Aides traveling with Obama have insisted in briefing after briefing -and privately- that he and his administration consulted widely with Democrats and Republicans before he authorized a U.S. role in the military strikes. Mindful of the risk of a new foreign entanglement, Obama and his aides believed it was important to stop Libya from becoming a slaughterhouse and avoid a potential repeat of the Bosnian and Rwandan massacres of the 1990s. "It was a damned if you do, damned if you don't scenario," one member of Obama's traveling delegation said. (Reuters)

THREE) – LIBYA WAR COST COULD RISE CONSIDERABLY

The 'no-fly zone' over Libya could end up costing more than \$1 billion if the operation drags on more than a couple of months, defense analysts say. Zack Cooper, a senior analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, said the initial cost of eliminating Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's air defenses was likely to be between \$400 million and \$800 million. The expense of patrolling the no-fly zone once it is established is likely to be \$30 million to \$100 million per week, he said. The U.S. military has no official cost figures yet for the operation, which has been going on less than a week. By comparison, however, the much more extensive Afghan war costs more than \$9 billion per month. The operation unfolding in Libya resembles a scenario for a limited no-fly zone analyzed by Cooper and his colleague Todd Harrison. The scenario assumed a limited no-fly zone covering Libya north of the 29th parallel, not the entire country. They made their projections by computing the cost per square mile of previous no-fly zones and applying that to the situation in Libya. The price of munitions, jet fuel and maintenance were the primary cost drivers. Their figures reflected the cost over and above regular operations. Cooper said the Tomahawk cruise missiles fired so far by Britain and the United States cost about \$200 million, putting the price for taking out Gaddafi's air defenses on target to hit their projection. "We estimated \$400 million to \$800 million. Between the Tomahawks and other munitions and flight hours and fuel, it's probably going to be somewhere in that ... range for the initial cost of suppressing the air defenses," he said. The crash of a U.S. F-15 warplane was an unexpected cost. Cooper said the Pentagon was unlikely buy another F-15 and probably would replace it with a joint strike fighter, with an estimated price tag of between \$100 million and \$150 million. One thing Cooper and Harrison hadn't anticipated was significant coalition support, with allies bearing part of the expense. Cooper said it appeared the United States had flown more than half of the sorties and fired most of the Tomahawks. "In our analysis, we assumed that the U.S. would be picking up the bulk of the cost," he said. "So even though the U.S. has picked up more than a majority of the cost, I assume, so far, it probably hasn't picked up as much as we estimated." **IT'S PEANUTS, SAY BRITAIN, FRANCE** The main European countries enforcing the no-fly zone downplayed the cost of the operation. British Finance Minister George Osborne told Parliament to expect the cost to be in the tens of millions of pounds. While saying it was too early for a "robust estimate" of the price of the Libya operations, Osborn projected the costs would be "modest" compared to operations like Afghanistan. "The Ministry of

Defense's initial view is that this will be in the order of the tens of millions not the hundreds of millions of pounds," Osborne said. But defense analysts warned that British expenses for even a limited operation like Libya could quickly add up. Analyst Francis Tusa told BBC Radio 4 the missions flown so far cost Britain about 200,000 pounds (\$325,000) per aircraft, with missiles running another 800,000 pounds (\$1.3 million) apiece. With Britain flying 10 Typhoon fighters to patrol the no-fly zone, "you'll be looking at potentially two, three million pounds a day (\$3.25 million to \$5 million)," he said. French analysts also attempted to downplay the expense, saying the intervention was likely to cost Britain and the United States much more since they used pricier weapons. "It's peanuts," said Jean Dominique Merchet, editor of blog secret defense on military affairs. It costs about 30,000 euros (\$45,000) per hour to operate a Rafale fighter, he said, but most would have been in the air at least an hour a day anyway. But Pierre Tran, Paris bureau chief for specialist weekly Defense News, said even though France was using less expensive munitions, the costs would quickly begin to add up. "If this campaign goes on for very much longer, it would be costly in terms of fuel consumed, flying hours for the pilots, and eventually munitions used," he said. (Reuters)

FOUR) - TURKISH CONCERNS ON LIBYA LARGELY RESOLVED, SAYS WASHINGTON

Turkey's concerns about an international effort to impose a no-fly zone over Libya have largely been settled, a senior U.S. official told reporters on Tuesday. Asked if Turkey, which had previously said it was unable to agree to NATO taking over the no-fly zone if its scope exceeded what the U.N. Security Council had sanctioned, was now fully on board, the U.S. official told reporters: "I do believe the Turks have largely resolved the questions they had before." (Reuters)

FIVE) – U.S. SEES MORE ARAB PARTICIPATION IN LIBYA WAR WITHIN DAYS

The United States expects more Arab nations in the next several days to contribute to the no-fly zone being imposed over Libya, a senior U.S. official told reporters on Tuesday. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also said the United States was confident that it could find a way to use NATO military capabilities while bringing in countries from outside the Western security alliance. (Reuters)

SAUDI VERY SUPPORTIVE ON LIBYA, SAYS CAMERON Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud at a meeting with British Prime Minister David Cameron in London on Tuesday expressed strong support for the aims of the U.N. resolution on Libya, Cameron's office said. "On Libya, the prime minister set out the action we were taking in support of implementation of UNSCR 1973. Prince Saud expressed strong support for the aims of UNSCR 1973 and the steps being taken by the international community to enforce it," Downing Street said in a statement. (Reuters)

SIX) – U.S. IMPOSES MORE SANCTIONS ON LIBYA

Le département du Trésor américain a indiqué mardi que les sanctions économiques des Etats-Unis contre le régime libyen s'étendaient à quatorze sociétés qu'il a identifiées comme des filiales de la compagnie pétrolière nationale libyenne. Le Trésor "a identifié quatorze sociétés détenues par la National Oil Corporation (NOC) de Libye comme étant sujettes aux sanctions" établies par décret présidentiel contre le régime du colonel Mouammar Kadhafi, indique un communiqué officiel. "La NOC est la pièce centrale de l'appareil pétrolier d'Etat libyen et elle contrôle un réseau de sociétés qui s'occupent d'exploration pétrolière, de production et de vente de pétrole", écrit le Trésor. Les président américain Barack Obama a signé le 25 février un décret instituant des sanctions économiques contre le régime de Tripoli. Ces sanctions prévoient le gel des avoirs de toute la famille Kadhafi, de toutes les "hauts responsables du gouvernement libyen", de l'Etat libyen et de ses entités, et de toute personne coupable directement ou indirectement de violations des droits de l'homme en Libye. Elles interdisent également toute transaction commerciale ou financière avec les personnes morales ou physiques visées par ces sanctions. (AFP)

SEVEN) – SARKOZY, OBAMA AGREE ON NATO USE TO BACK COALITION AGAINST LIBYA

France and the United States agree on how to use NATO's command structure in supporting the coalition in Libya, President Nicolas Sarkozy's office said in a statement. "The two presidents have come to an agreement on the way to use the command structures of NATO to support the coalition," the statement said, without giving any additional details. (Reuters)

EIGHT) – ANTI-LIBYA COALITION PARTNERS TO MEET SOON, SAYS FRANCE

Foreign ministers of countries taking part in military action in Libya are set to meet in the coming days, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said on Tuesday. Juppe was speaking in parliament on the operation that began on Saturday. He mentioned Paris, Brussels and London as possible venues for a meeting that would take place in the next few days. Juppe also responded to an increasingly heated debate about the leadership of the Western air campaign against Libyan tanks and air defences. "At the president's behest, I've proposed the agreement of our British colleagues that we set up a political structure to guide operations, involving foreign ministers from countries that are taking part and from the Arab League," he said. He said the goal was to limit the intervention in Libya to a short period. David Cameron said the intention was to transfer command of the U.N.-mandated intervention to NATO, but France's Juppe said on Monday Arab countries were wary of letting the U.S.-led alliance take charge of the operation. Underlining the differences in the anti-Gaddafi coalition, Italy's Foreign Minister Franco Frattini said if agreement was not reached on a NATO command, Italy would resume control of the seven airbases it has made available to allied air forces. On Tuesday, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Christine Fages said NATO could provide help when the United States scaled back its participation but she also said the issue of who should run the alliance was not pressing for the time being. "We have no problem with seeking (NATO) help. What matters at the moment is implementing the U.N. resolution and for the time being, the U.S. leadership is working," Fages told reporters at a regular briefing. (Reuters)

NINE) – GADDAFI SEEKING WAY OUT, SAYS CLINTON

Des proches du colonel Mouammar Kadhafi sont entrés en contact avec des alliés de la Libye pour trouver une porte de sortie au conflit, a affirmé mardi la secrétaire d'Etat américaine Hillary Clinton sur la chaîne ABC. (AFP)

TEN) – WEST WILL END IN "DUSTBIN OF HISTORY", SAYS GADDAFI

Western powers attacking Libya will end up in the dustbin of history, Muammar Gaddafi said as his troops held back rebels despite four nights of air strikes. While Western air power has grounded Gaddafi's warplanes and pushed back his forces from the brink of rebel stronghold Benghazi, disorganised and poorly equipped insurgents have failed to capitalise on the ground and remain pinned down. The rebels have been unable to dislodge Gaddafi's forces from the key junction of Ajdabiyah in the east, while government tanks are besieging the last big rebel hold-out of Misrata. There is big risk of stalemate on the ground, analysts say. At least two explosions were heard in the Libyan capital Tripoli before dawn on Wednesday, Reuters witnesses said. The roar of a fighter jet was heard above the city followed by a barrage of anti-aircraft gunfire. "We will not surrender," Gaddafi earlier told supporters forming a human shield to protect him at his Tripoli compound. "We will defeat them by any means ... We are ready for the fight, whether it will be a short or a long one ... We will be victorious in the end," he said in a live television broadcast, his first public appearance since the air strikes began. "This assault ... is by a bunch of fascists who will end up in the dustbin of history," Gaddafi said in a speech followed by fireworks in the Libyan capital as crowds cheered and supporters fired guns into the air. The Libyan government denies its army is conducting any offensive operations and says troops are only defending themselves when they come under attack, but rebels and residents say Gaddafi's tanks have kept up their shelling of Misrata in the west, killing 40 people on Monday alone, and also attacked the small town of Zintan near the border with Tunisia. It was impossible to independently verify the reports. **REBELS BOGGED DOWN** The siege of Misrata, now weeks old, is becoming increasingly desperate, with water cut off for days and food running out, doctors operating on patients in hospital corridors and many of the wounded left untreated or simply turned away. "The situation in the local hospital is disastrous," said a Misrata doctor in a statement. "The

doctors and medical teams are exhausted beyond human physical ability and some of them cannot reach the hospital because of tanks and snipers." The rebel effort in east Libya meanwhile was bogged down outside Ajdabiyah, with no movement on the strategic town since Gaddafi's remaining tanks holed up there after the government's armoured advance along the open road to Benghazi was blown to bits by French air strikes on Saturday night. Hiding in the sand dunes from the tank fire coming from the town, the rebels are without heavy weapons, leadership, communication, or even a plan. While Western countries remain reluctant to commit ground troops who could guide in close air strikes, it remains to be seen whether the rebel's bravado and faith in God can take towns and advance towards their target of capturing Tripoli. (Reuters)

ELEVEN) – GERMANY ORDERS NAVY NOT TO OBEY NATO ORDERS

L'Allemagne a décidé de suspendre mardi la participation de ses navires de guerre aux opérations de l'Otan en mer Méditerranée, pour ne pas participer au contrôle de l'embargo sur les armes à destination de la Libye, a annoncé le ministère de la Défense. "L'Otan a décidé un embargo sur les armes contre la Libye, qui a aussi des conséquences concrètes, pouvant se traduire notamment par un éventuel recours à des armes. L'Allemagne n'y participera pas", a expliqué à l'AFP un porte-parole du ministère de la Défense. "Le ministère a donc décidé ce jour (mardi) de placer deux frégates et deux bateaux en mer Méditerranée sous commandement national", a-t-il ajouté. L'Allemagne s'était abstenue, la semaine dernière, lors du vote de la résolution au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU ouvrant la voie aux opérations militaires contre le régime du colonel Mouammar Kadhafi et avait refusé que des soldats allemands y prennent part. L'Otan a accepté mardi de se charger de l'embargo sur les armes contre la Libye, en assignant des navires et des avions à cette mission, au terme de sept jours de réunion au siège bruxellois de l'Organisation, a annoncé son secrétaire général, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Les 28 ambassadeurs ont aussi entériné des plans militaires pour participer à une zone d'interdiction aérienne. Il faudra cependant des jours pour décider si l'Otan met ou non en application ces plans, ont indiqué des diplomates à l'AFP. (AFP)

TWELVE) – CHINA SEIZES ON LIBYA WAR FOR PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE WEST

A plot to seize Libya's oil. A warning to the world that the West will cling to dominance. A flagrant display of hypocrisy over human rights. China's ruling Communist Party has countered the West's air strikes against Libya's Muammar Gaddafi with a torrent of such criticisms in state-run newspapers and television, mounting a propaganda campaign to deter the public from any temptation to copy Arab insurrections against authoritarian rulers. Since the air strikes in Libya began, China's government has pushed propaganda into high pitch to tell the public that the Libyan shows the West cannot be trusted and will put self-interest ahead of principles. "In recent days, some well-known domestic (Chinese) websites have proposed the weird argument that human rights are more important than sovereignty," said an editorial in the Global Times, a popular Chinese tabloid, on Wednesday. The Libya air campaign is meant to send "the international political signal that in this world it's the West that calls the shots," said the paper. "Iraq was attacked because of oil, and Libya is also being attacked for its oil," said the overseas edition of the People's Daily, the main mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party. Beijing's opposition to the Western attacks in Libya reflects its longstanding opposition to intervening in other countries' internal conflicts, especially in the name of human rights. "Behind the air strikes on Libya is self-interest," said the headline in the Military Weekly, published by China's People's Liberation Army. "The air attacks are an announcement that the West wants to dominate the world," the Global Times said on Tuesday. "The West still believes down to its very bones that it's the leader of the world." This is not a new script for China. In 1999, China denounced NATO's Kosovo campaign as reckless meddling, its outrage reaching fever pitch after U.S. bombs hit the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing three people inside. Likewise, Chinese state media have criticised the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as demonstrations of Western hypocrisy and self-interest. Nowadays, Chinese officials confront a domestic Internet which, despite extensive censorship, is even bigger and often livelier than during those wars, said Zhan Jiang, a professor of media studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University. Chinese President Hu Jintao is worried about controlling the country's 453 million Internet users. In a speech last month, he urged "establishing mechanisms to guide online public opinion." "This is a bit like the Kosovo War in 1999, except now I think the Internet is a much bigger force and there's more support online for ideas about democracy," said Zhan. (Reuters)

THIRTEEN) – WEST BOMBARDMENTS HAVE AVOIDED BENGHAZI DISASTER, SAYS EU PRESIDENCY

Les frappes aériennes menées en Libye par les pays de la coalition internationale "ont permis d'éviter le pire" sur le plan humanitaire, a affirmé lundi la présidence hongroise de l'UE dans un entretien téléphonique accordé à l'AFP. "Le pire a été évité par les frappes de la coalition. Si elles n'avaient pas eu lieu samedi, nous aurions des centaines de milliers de réfugiés", a expliqué le chef de la diplomatie hongroise Janos Martonyi qui s'exprimait à Sollum, ville égyptienne à la frontière avec la Libye, où il a effectué une visite dans la journée. Martonyi a salué "les efforts de la France, du Royaume-Uni et des autres pays de la coalition internationale", qui ont pourtant divisé l'Union européenne. Selon lui, la situation à la frontière égypto-libyenne "est sous contrôle", mais "il peut y avoir des problèmes de nourriture, car les prix des denrées ont doublé". "Nous sommes là pour nous renseigner et voir quelles propositions nous pouvons faire sur le plan humanitaire et sur le plan des migrations", a-t-il précisé. "Un millier de réfugiés originaires de pays africains sont à la frontière. Le problème est qu'ils n'ont pas de documents d'identité et il va falloir trouver des solutions", a-t-il expliqué. De nombreux Libyens se sont également réfugiés en Egypte, "mais ils commencent à retourner dans leur pays car la situation a changé", a ajouté M. Martonyi. Le chef de la diplomatie hongroise était accompagné dans ce déplacement par la commissaire européenne chargée de l'immigration Cécilia Malmström. Les deux représentants de l'UE doivent s'entretenir mardi avec les autorités égyptiennes. (AFP)

FOURTEEN) EU DIPLOMACY IS LIKE AN AIRPLANE WITH NO WINGS, SAYS ASHTON

European Union diplomacy still has a long way to go before becoming a fully-operational machine, the bloc's top foreign policy official Catherine Ashton said on Tuesday. In a hearing at the European Parliament in Brussels, Ashton said heading the EU's fledgling diplomatic service was "like flying an airplane while we are still building the wings and somebody is trying to take the tailfin off at the same time." The so-called European External Action Service (EEAS) was launched earlier this year and has endured a baptism of fire as unrest flared in North Africa and the Middle East. Referring to the latest events in Libya, Ashton said that the EEAS had been successful in coordinating evacuation efforts and confirmed that military planning was ongoing to support humanitarian efforts. The EU has stayed out of direct military intervention against Libya, leaving individual member states to decide whether to take part in enforcing the United Nations-mandated tasks of monitoring an arms embargo and policing a no-fly zone. (dpa)

FIFTEEN) – WHAT THE REST OF THE WORLD SAYS ABOUT WEST ONSLAUGHT ON LIBYA

Here is a snapshot of government views on the air strikes on Libya. * **ALGERIA:** -- Algeria called on Tuesday for an immediate end to Western military intervention, state news agency APS said. -- "We judge this intervention to be disproportionate in relation to the objective set out by the United Nations Security Council resolution," APS quoted Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci as saying. "(We demand) an immediate cessation of hostilities and foreign intervention." * **BRAZIL:** -- Brazil's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement: -- "After regretting the loss of lives because of the conflict in the country, the Brazilian government hopes that an effective ceasefire be implemented as soon as possible to allow the protection of civilians and the start of dialogue." * **CHINA:** -- China said on Tuesday that Western air strikes on Libya risked a "humanitarian disaster". -- "We have noted the reports about civilian casualties from the military action against Libya by the countries concerned, and we express our deep concern about this," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told a news conference in Beijing. -- "The original intent of the (U.N.) Security Council resolution was to protect the security of the Libya's people. We oppose the wanton use of armed force causing even more civilian casualties and an even bigger humanitarian disaster," she said. * **INDIA:** -- India's finance minister and leader of the lower house of parliament, Pranab Mukherjee, said no external powers should interfere in the internal affairs of a country. -- "Nobody, not a couple of countries, can take that decision to change a particular regime," Mukherjee said in New Delhi on Tuesday. -- Indian Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna called for the "cessation of armed conflict" on Monday after his ministry issued a statement expressing "regret" over the air strikes. * **IRAQ:** -- Iraq said on Monday it supported international intervention in Libya, but influential Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr condemned it and said Western states should avoid civilian casualties. -- Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said Iraq supported the U.N. Security Council resolution that authorised the intervention, and would back any action as long as it was authorised by the United Nations. * **RUSSIA:** -- Russia has criticised allied bombing and called for an immediate ceasefire. -- After a meeting U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates, Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov said "an immediate ceasefire and a dialogue between the belligerent parties is the surest path to the

reliable security of civilians." -- Russia was among countries that abstained from the Security Council vote authorising military action in Libya. -- Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, widely regarded as the most powerful man in Russia, told workers on Monday that the U.N. resolution authorising the use of force against Gaddafi's forces "resembles medieval calls for crusades." -- However Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov later said: "The assessment expressed by the prime minister is nothing other than his personal opinion. The assessment expressed by the head of state (Medvedev) is the only official position of the Russian Federation, which everyone is adhering to." * **TURKEY**: -- Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that the U.N. should be the umbrella for a solely humanitarian operation in Libya. -- In a speech to parliament, Erdogan said: "Turkey will never ever be a side pointing weapons at the Libyan people." -- Ankara has so far opposed giving NATO command over military operations in Libya. * **UGANDA**: -- Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni condemned foreign air strikes against Gaddafi's forces, accusing the West of double standards and a thirst for more oil. -- "The Western countries always use double standards," Museveni wrote in an 18-page statement. -- "In Libya, they are very eager to impose a no-fly zone. In Bahrain and other areas where there are pro-Western regimes, they turn a blind eye to the very same conditions or even worse conditions." -- Museveni also hit out against Gaddafi. "These positions of Colonel Gaddafi have been unfortunate and unnecessary." (Reuters)

SIXTEEN) - PUTIN PLAYS DOWN DIFFERENCES WITH MEDVEDEV ON LIBYA WAR

Vladimir Poutine a solennellement affirmé mardi qu'il n'avait aucune divergence avec le président Dmitri Medvedev, répondant ainsi aux interrogations nées la veille après des déclarations totalement contradictoires des deux dirigeants russes. Alors que la presse et des experts russes s'interrogeaient sur une éventuelle rivalité entre les deux hommes en vue de l'élection présidentielle de 2012, après leur opposition sur la "croisade" occidentale en Libye, M. Poutine a écarté toute idée de divergence. "En ce qui concerne l'unité de vue ou pas de la direction russe à propos de la Libye, chez nous c'est le président qui dirige la politique extérieure, et dans ce domaine il ne peut y avoir de divergence", a déclaré M. Poutine lors d'une conférence de presse dans la soirée à Ljubljana, où il était en visite. "Si cela vous intéresse de savoir si nous voyons les choses de manière différente avec M. Medvedev, je vous assure que nous sommes proches et que nous nous comprenons mutuellement", a martelé le chef du gouvernement russe. M. Poutine avait vertement critiqué lundi la résolution de l'ONU autorisant le recours à la force en Libye, en la comparant à un "appel aux croisades" du Moyen Age. Il a ensuite affirmé qu'il exprimait son "avis personnel". Dmitri Medvedev a aussitôt réagi, jugeant "inadmissible" et "inacceptable" l'accusation de "croisade", et défendant sa décision de ne pas opposer le veto de Moscou à la résolution de l'ONU. "La question est de savoir s'il s'agit d'une +divergence de style+ dont le tandem (Poutine-Medvedev) est coutumier ou si cela exprime des désaccords plus profonds, qui se renforceraient à l'approche des élections", souligne l'influent quotidien libéral Kommersant. Vedomosti estime "plus logique" l'hypothèse selon laquelle "Moscou a deux positions, une destinée à Obama et Sarkozy, et l'autre destinée aux ouvriers d'Oudmourtie", la région de Sibérie où Vladimir Poutine s'est exprimé lundi. Une analyse partagée par nombre d'observateurs à Moscou, selon lesquels la direction russe, au sein de laquelle Vladimir Poutine reste largement considéré comme l'homme fort du pays, se partage les rôles au gré des opportunités politiques. "Quand il n'y a pas de débat politique dans le pays, il faut de temps en temps créer l'illusion qu'il est possible", estimait mardi un commentateur de la radio russe bfm. Selon la même source, "aucune personne saine d'esprit ne peut imaginer que Medvedev ait pu prendre tout seul la décision dans le vote de la résolution 1973" de l'ONU, sur laquelle Moscou s'est abstenu la semaine dernière, laissant la porte ouverte à l'intervention occidentale. (AFP)

SEVENTEEN) - RUSSIA SET TO PROFIT FROM LIBYA, JAPAN CRISES

Only a year ago, Russia's dominance as a global energy supplier was threatened by low gas prices and a reputation as an unreliable trade partner. But with the world now shaken by Japan's natural disasters and uprisings across the Middle East, the country is back at the heart of the market - and cashing in. Russia's state-owned monopoly Gazprom rushed to sell extra gas to European nations when their supplies from Libya ran dry during the escalating violence there. It will also gain from selling energy to Japan, where an earthquake and tsunami have shut down 12 gigawatts of nuclear capacity. Gazprom told the Associated Press on Tuesday it is willing to ship more gas to Japan and is now in talks with several power-generating companies such as Tokyo Electric to sell them liquefied natural gas. Japan's struggle to keep radiation from leaking at the Fukushima nuclear plant, meanwhile, has caused a deep rethink in the role of nuclear energy, particularly in Europe. The

upshot of the recent weeks' events, analysts say, is that fossil fuel producers stand to gain, particularly Russia. "There's every reason to assume that these events are a game changer both for Gazprom and Russia because Russia is viewed as a much more reliable gas supplier, and the customers are more likely to want to lock in supplies," said Chris Weafer, chief strategist at Moscow-based brokerage UralSib. While its reputation has in the past been tarnished by sudden gas cut-offs due to pricing disputes with Ukraine, [Gazprom](#) - the company that handles the Russian state's gas trade - has always insisted it was reliable. With unrest spreading across the Middle East and threatening major new sources of gas, like Algeria, that may no longer sound like an exaggeration. Russia already provides two-fifths of Europe's gas imports, a figure could grow. Libya, by comparison, accounted for about 2 percent before its taps were turned off because of the conflict. In Japan, where authorities are trying to avert a nuclear meltdown and find energy supplies to feed the electricity grid, Gazprom has taken the opportunity to try to gain a foothold in a market it has long been trying to crack. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said last week that Russia could re-direct Europe-bound liquefied natural gas - which can be transported by ship - to Japan while shipping more piped gas to Europe. Moscow-based investment bank VTB Capital has estimated that events in Japan and Libya could add an extra 3 to 5 percent to Gazprom's sales this year - based on the assumption that Russia will sell an extra 10 to 15 billion cubic meters of gas to Europe and Japan. In March, its sales were up by 1.5 billion cubic meters, or about 10 percent, compared with a year earlier. **TIME TO EXTRACT CONCESSIONS FROM EUROPE** Experts say Russia could also take advantage of the greater levels of uncertainty in world energy markets - which have pushed crude prices to 2½ year highs above \$100 a barrel - to extract long-term concessions from Europe. The European Commission and EU governments have been cautious about relying on Russian energy, and have set up legislation which Gazprom views as discriminatory. Moscow has been angry with EU plans to force gas producers to separate production from pipeline management - preventing one company from controlling the entire supply chain in a country. Because of that law, for example, Gazprom is forced to sell its pipeline in Lithuania. In the longer-term, the nuclear plant disaster in Japan has also raised questions in Europe about the safety of nuclear power, which had often been viewed as a way of diversifying away from Russian gas supplies. Germany, for one, has ordered one nuclear plant to be closed and six other reactors shut down temporarily as a precaution. Fossil fuels such as oil and gas - and sellers such as Russia's Gazprom - stand to benefit from the review of Europe's nuclear energy plans, market watchers said. "If it wasn't for the recent events, there would be hardly anything to cool the heads of European politicians who are eager to brush off the dependence on Russian gas at any cost," said Valery Nesterov, gas analyst with Russia's biggest private investment bank Troika Dialog. But with European gas markets still oversupplied, Gazprom will still have to try hard to gain market share. "If Russia does not offer more reasonable gas prices, it will not be competitive," said energy expert Claudia Kemfert at the German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin. Gazprom, however, insisted on Tuesday that its contracts with European companies are flexible and "balance interests of sellers and buyers". Kemfert said that the EU-backed Nabucco pipeline, one of Europe's main tools to get away from relying on Russia, and LNG from other countries could become ultimate winners of recent developments. But while Nabucco still struggles to contract gas for its pipeline, Russia's rival project South Stream, which is expected to send up to 63 billion cubic meters of gas to central and southern Europe under the Black Sea, is becoming a reality. It got extra backing when Germany's BASF joined the project Monday, promising to bring \$2 billion (\$3.1 billion) to the venture. The European Commission's spokeswoman Nicole Bockstaller told the AP that its position towards Gazprom and South Stream is unchanged. (AP)

EIGHTEEN) - PROPAGANDA WILL PROVE CRUCIAL IN LIBYA WAR

Propaganda may prove to be the most important battleground for Western forces seeking to protect Libyan civilians. From Gaddafi's point of view, the battle for hearts and minds may offer him his best hope of political survival. Perhaps because it was created at such short notice, the multinational alliance is struggling to speak with one voice as it explains its aims to sceptical Arab and domestic audiences. The information war is an urgent priority for Western powers because the policing of a U.N.-mandated no fly zone inevitably places lives on the ground at some degree of risk. Inadvertent killings of civilians by the very force deployed to protect them would be exploited by Gaddafi to shore up his domestic support and divide allies jittery about using force. Analysts say Libya's leader is seeking to ensure a starkly different storyline emerges internationally than the one sought by the West -that despotic and greedy powers are trying to recolonise Libya for its oil, killing civilians in the process. "Gaddafi is no fool," said Richard Holmes, professor of military and security studies at Britain's Cranfield University. "He is surrounded by bright men whose lives and liberty are at stake, and so they will try to unhinge the coalition." **FRACTIOUS ALLIES** Holmes said the alliance must not interpret its mandate aggressively, for example by arming the rebels or using ground forces: This would probably be illegal, would

certainly alienate Arab allies and provoke a nationalist rally in Gaddafi's ranks. Instead the allies should start an information drive to gather support for the sole aim of protecting civilians, forging a united front Gaddafi would find hard to divide, he said. It should also focus on his repression of Libya's popular uprising. "Gaddafi's is a shocking regime that is killing people under vile circumstances. We need to keep coming back to that. But that bad behaviour does not justify illegality." Four days in to the bombing, evidence abounds of allied fractiousness over the legitimacy of the operation. On Tuesday U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said on a visit to Moscow that some people in Russia seemed to believe what he termed Gaddafi's "lies" about civilian casualties. Hours later a note of Arab dissent emerged when Algeria called for an immediate end to Western military intervention. **QUARRELLING NATO** There has also been bad-tempered debate inside NATO about who should command the military campaign once the United States steps back from leading the operation. Even inside Western governments, disputes have rumbled. A case in point was a moment on Monday of open disarray among British officials over the legality of killing Gaddafi. Ali Adullatif Ahmida, a Libya expert and political scientist at the University of New England, said such moments of discord provided a vivid demonstration that the conflict was "a symbolic and information battle" as well as a military one. **GADDAFI "IS NOT A BUFFOON"** Gaddafi understands this well, he said. He is playing on fears among Libyans that Western attacks may destroy the nation's infrastructure and tip the country into chaos, he said. "Gaddafi might be brutal but he is not a buffoon. He is a very astute and shrewd leader," he said. "Inside Libya there are many who might not be for Gaddafi, but they are really anxious and afraid Libya might turn into another Iraq or Somalia." Holmes said Gaddafi would seek to argue that the allies are destroying Libya in the same way that Iraq was broken down after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. "That is going to be a very appealing argument to both Gaddafi loyalists and to Arabs more widely," he said. But Gaddafi will face some propaganda challenges of his own. Graham Cundy, a British military specialist at [Diligence](#), a security and intelligence consultancy, said Western strikes were intended to build a "counter-narrative" to Gaddafi's to show his military forces were vulnerable no matter where they were. "This vulnerability needs to be seen by the loyalist population, not just by the military," said Cundy, adding the aim was to dissuade the loyalists from continuing to fight. **SEEKING DEFECTIONS** There are signs that some of this is having an effect. In Tripoli on Tuesday, Reuters correspondents reported that some people felt bold enough to drop their customary praise of Gaddafi for a few moments and say instead they want him gone. Analysts say it is not only the alliance that must communicate better. The opposition National Council had been poor at telling Gaddafi associates they would not be persecuted in a post-Gaddafi Libya, Hmida said, adding this message could be an important tool to secure defections. Defections of such officials in significant numbers could prove a turning point in the conflict. Holmes said the rebels and the allies had to extend such a "golden bridge" or lifeline to Gaddafi loyalists, and fashion a propaganda campaign subtle enough to communicate this offer. "Once you've engaged in something that seems like war, it's easy to regard your enemy as monolithic," he said. "But it's important to give a 'golden bridge'... In other words, don't by your words and actions further harden the mood." (Reuters)

NINETEEN) - ATTACK ON LIBYA MAKES FRANCO-GERMAN DEFENCE COOPERATION A REALITY

L'opération internationale au-dessus de la Libye concrétise le rapprochement franco-britannique en matière de Défense, mais Paris et Londres, en première ligne pour instaurer une zone d'exclusion aérienne, divergent sur le rôle de l'Otan. "Nous ne sommes plus en exercice, nous sommes en opération, beaucoup de moyens sont engagés", confie un responsable de la Défense. Résultat : un exercice aérien franco-britannique programmé jeudi sur la base de Nancy a été annulé au profit des opérations en Libye, dont la France et la Grande-Bretagne ont été les plus chauds partisans. "Kadhafi et sa clique doivent partir" : dès le 10 mars, Nicolas Sarkozy et David Cameron avaient affiché leur détermination. Le président français et le Premier ministre britannique ont ensuite fait le forcing pour convaincre des Américains réticents et obtenir, le 17 mars, le vote de la résolution 1973 de l'ONU autorisant l'usage de la force pour protéger les populations civiles. Depuis, les Rafale français et les Eurofighter britanniques sillonnent le ciel libyen, au côté des appareils américains et de quelques pays de la coalition. Paris a dépêché le porte-avions Charles de Gaulle au large de la Libye et Londres a tiré d'un sous-marin de classe Trafalgar des missiles de croisière Tomahawk sur les sites de défense libyens. De Gaulle, Trafalgar : deux références qui ne reflètent guère la concorde franco-britannique. Mais la crise financière et les contraintes budgétaires ont convaincu les plus réticents de la nécessité d'un rapprochement militaire, scellé en novembre dernier par un accord de Défense qualifié d'"historique" par les deux pays. Un partenariat qui prévoit notamment la création d'une "force expéditionnaire commune" et une coopération dans une installation commune en matière nucléaire. Les deux armées multiplient depuis les contacts et mettent en place des exercices communs. **LIKE SUEZ, BUT WITHOUT ISRAEL** L'opération militaire sur la Libye accélère ce rapprochement, au risque, souligne un expert, d'apparaître comme "un truc franco-britannique" qui rappelle

l'échec cuisant dans la région de l'expédition de Suez en 1956. Mais s'ils affichent une volonté commune de stopper les forces du colonel Kadhafi, Paris et Londres divergent sur le commandement des opérations. Londres réclame le transfert "le moment venu" de l'opération "à un commandement de l'Otan". Alors que Paris reste déterminé à limiter le rôle de l'Alliance atlantique pour gagner la confiance du monde arabe. Mardi, la France semblait avoir fait des concessions à ses partenaires en acceptant que l'Otan joue un rôle, encore mal délimité, dans le commandement. Un rôle purement "technique", selon le porte-parole du gouvernement François Baroin, alors que la Maison Blanche a évoqué un "rôle clé". L'opération en Libye va en revanche à l'encontre de la politique de Défense européenne, ardemment défendue par la France, l'Allemagne, autre grand partenaire européen, ayant décidé de se tenir à l'écart. L'urgence invoquée par Paris et Londres de venir en aide à la population de Benghazi, dans l'est de la Libye, pour justifier l'intervention internationale a prévalu sur la solidarité européenne. (AFP)

TWENTY) - U.S. IMPOSES SANCTIONS AGAINST LIBYAN OIL COMPANIES

The United States has named 14 companies owned by Libya's state oil firm as subject to sanctions including prominent east Libyan operator Agoco, aiming to cut off a key source of funds for Muammar Gaddafi's regime. The list of 14 firms owned by Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) was identified by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, and given in a Treasury statement on Tuesday. "The Libyan National Oil Corporation has been a primary funding source for the Gaddafi regime," said Adam J. Szubin, director of OFAC, in the statement. "Consistent with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, all governments should block the National Oil Corporation's assets and ensure that Gaddafi cannot use this network of companies to support his activities." Following the U.S. steps, European Union governments agreed on Wednesday to impose sanctions on NOC and to add four other oil firms to EU measures, diplomats said. Oil exports from Libya, Africa's third-largest oil producer before violence erupted there, have ground to a halt because of mounting difficulties with financing, sanctions and a lack of crude supplies. Austrian energy group, which in 2010 got about a tenth of its production from Libya, said on Wednesday it had no deliveries pending or planned. NOC Chairman Shokri Ghanem, who regularly speaks to international media about Libya's oil industry, was not available to comment on Wednesday. On Friday, he said NOC was still selling any available oil. AGOCO PLANS Agoco, a firm based in rebel-controlled east Libya, is planning to start marketing oil separately from its parent NOC. An Agoco spokesman told Reuters on Wednesday the firm was drawing up new contracts he believed the rebel National Council would receive revenue from any Agoco sales of oil. Libya produced about 1.6 million barrels of oil per day before the crisis, or almost 2 percent of world output. While Agoco was included on the list of sanctioned companies, the Treasury statement said that could change should the firms come under different ownership. "Should National Oil Corporation subsidiaries or facilities come under different ownership and control, Treasury may consider authorizing dealings with such entities," it said. The companies identified as firms owned by NOC are: Arabian Gulf Oil Company, also known as Agoco Azzawiya Oil Refining Company Brega Petroleum Marketing Company Harouge Oil Operations Jamahiriya Oil Well Fluids And Equipment Mediterranean Oil Services Company Mediterranean Oil Services GMBH National Oil Fields and Terminals Catering Company North African Geophysical Exploration Company National Oil Wells Drilling and Workover Company Ras Lanuf Oil And Gas Processing Company Sirte Oil Company for Production Manufacturing of Oil and Gas Zueitina Oil Company Waha Oil Company(Reuters)

TWENTY ONE) - EU AGREES SANCTIONS AGAINST LIBYAN OIL COMPANIES

European Union governments agreed on Wednesday to impose sanctions on Libya's National Oil Company, in line with last week's United Nations resolution, and to add four other oil firms to EU measures, diplomats said. The move follows a decision by the U.N. Security Council to authorise a no-fly zone over Libya and expand sanctions against Muammar Gaddafi and his close allies that were first imposed in February. In addition to the U.N. measures, the European Union has also imposed a series of further sanctions over the past month against Gaddafi and companies associated with him or his inner circle. The list so far has included more than 30 people and groups, such as Libya's central bank and the \$70 billion Libyan Investment Authority. Germany has pushed for the inclusion of energy firms, but Italy has until now opposed this. "The sanctions were adopted," said one EU diplomat. However, the impact of an oil embargo against Libya is likely to be limited because the country's oil industry has been brought to a standstill by heavy fighting between rebels and the government of Gaddafi. Libya had been producing 1.6 million barrels per day. (Reuters)

TWENTY TWO) - SWEDEN FREEZES LIBYAN ASSETS

La Suède a annoncé mercredi avoir gelé pour plus de 10 milliards de couronnes (1,12 milliards d'euros) d'actifs appartenant au régime libyen du colonel Kadhafi, conformément aux sanctions décrétées par l'Union européenne. "Conformément aux sanctions édictées par l'UE (...) en liaison avec la situation en Libye, les sociétés financières suédoises ont déclaré à l'Autorité de supervision financière suédoise avoir gelé au total jusqu'ici plus de 10 milliards de couronnes", indique l'autorité financière suédoise dans un communiqué. Elle ne donne aucune autre précision, n'identifie pas les sociétés visées, ne détaille pas le montant des actifs gelés par société et ne nomme pas de personnes visées par la mesure. Les sanctions de l'UE contre des entités financières libyennes et des membres du gouvernement du pays, dont Mouammar Kadhafi, visent notamment le fonds souverain du gouvernement libyen Libyan Investment Authority (LIA) qui gère les revenus pétroliers du pays. La radio publique suédoise a indiqué mercredi que la LIA avait notamment investi dans le groupe suédois d'aluminium Kupal. La radio suédoise et le quotidien Dagens Nyheter rappellent en outre qu'une mosquée à Malmö (sud) et des activités de recherche à l'Université d'Uppsala auraient été financées par Tripoli. (AFP)

TWENTY THREE) - NATO FLOTILLA TO START PATROLLING OFF LIBYAN COAST

NATO warships will begin patrolling off Libya's coast to enforce the U.N. arms embargo Wednesday, as the alliance appeared set to assume responsibility for the no-fly zone over the North African nation to protect civilians. Diplomats said an agreement is gradually emerging about how NATO would take responsibility for the flight ban, after the United States - which has effectively commanded the operation until now - reiterated that it was committed to the transition. The compromise proposal would see NATO take a key role in the military operation guided by a political committee of foreign ministers from the West and the Arab world. Officials said the North Atlantic Council - NATO's top decision-making body, which already has approved military plans for enforcing the no-fly zone - may decide to start them later Wednesday. "The best outcome would be to have NATO handle military coordination, but hand political decisions to an ad hoc council of states participating in the coalition, including Arab countries," said Francois Heisbourg, director of the Foundation for Strategic Research, a think tank funded by France's Defense Ministry. Spanish Defense Minister Carme Chacon endorsed the proposal for handing over control of the Libya operation to a political committee. "We are comfortable with that," she said. Germany is in a more difficult situation. The government, which is refusing to participate in the no-fly operation, approved on Wednesday sending air crews to man NATO's surveillance planes over Afghanistan after withdrawing troops from the alliance's Mediterranean Sea missions to avoid involvement in Libya. The government's decision to send up to 300 troops to man AWACS surveillance planes over Afghanistan is intended to help ease the strain on other NATO members, who may need to deploy to the Mediterranean. Military experts say coordinating the enforcement of a no-fly zone over a nation the size of Libya requires a specialized and experienced staff of several hundred people. The mission to provide round-the-clock coverage of Libyan airspace would require not just fighter planes patrolling the skies, but also attack jets armed with anti-radar missiles to suppress any threat from the ground. It would entail several aerial tankers flying circular patterns over the Mediterranean to refuel the warplanes. At least one and probably two AWACS airborne surveillance and control aircraft would also have to be nearby to monitor and coordinate the entire operation. The United States is one of the few nations with the operational headquarters capable of controlling such a complex mission. None of NATO's European members have that capability and therefore rely on the alliance to provide it. If NATO assumes responsibility for the enforcing the no-fly zone over Libya and the U.N. arms embargo against Libya, this would be controlled from NATO's operational center in Naples, a NATO official said. The allies agreed Tuesday to organize the naval mission, which initially will consist of two NATO naval flotillas that routinely patrol the Mediterranean. They are made up of two frigates, six minesweepers and a supply ship. The NATO official said more nations are likely to contribute warships in coming days. The operation will be similar to a naval mission carried out by NATO ships in the Adriatic Sea during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia that also enforced an arms embargo. **TURKEY URGES GADDAFI TO STEP DOWN** Meanwhile, Turkey's president called on Gadhafi to step down as soon as possible, saying that would help stop the bloodshed. Abdullah Gul said Wednesday such a move would also "deny the opportunity to others to plunder" their country. Turkey, NATO's sole Muslim member, has been insisting on a narrow military mandate for a NATO role in the military operation in Libya and assurances that no occupation of Libya will ensue. In Moscow, Russia's parliament passed a measure calling on the U.N. to impose a cease-fire in Libya and stop the violence against civilians. There are no reliable civilian death tolls from Libya. Rebels say over 1,000 people have been

killed in a month of fighting, while Gadhafi claims the toll stands at 150. In Oslo, Norway gave the go-ahead for six F-16 fighter jets to join the no-fly zone operation. The planes were transferred to an air base on Crete on Monday. Defense Minister Greta Faremo said the Norwegian planes would be ready to join the operation in a few days. (AP)

TWENTY FOUR) - **SOLID FRENCH POPULAR SUPPORT FOR LIBYA WAR**

A comfortable majority of French people support the international intervention in Libya, with a poll published Wednesday showing two out of three people approve the operation. The internet poll carried out by Ifop polling institute for France Soir newspaper on March 21 and 22 showed 66 per cent in favour and 34 per cent against. The results of the survey of 100 people contrast with the sceptical attitude of the French two weeks before the start of the campaign, when 63 per cent said they opposed a military intervention against Moamer Gaddafi's regime. French President Nicolas Sarkozy, supported by British Prime Minister David Cameron, led the diplomatic campaign for Western intervention to protect civilians from a crackdown by Gaddafi against rebels trying to overthrow him (dpa)

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