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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

*Colonel Mu'ammarr Mubammad al-QADHAFI
Chairman, Libyan Revolutionary Command Council*

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LIBYA

Mu'ammr Muhammad al-QADHAFI

Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council; Prime Minister; Minister of Defense; and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces



Col. Mu'ammr al-Qadhafi was a leading member of the group of junior army officers who overthrew the government of King Idris on 1 September 1969. Qadhafi has been chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) since its establishment immediately after the coup. He has been Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces since 8 September 1969, and in January 1970 he assumed the additional posts of Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. Qadhafi is a strong exponent of Arab unity and an admirer of UAR President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir. One US official describes Qadhafi as a militant idealist.

Background and Goals of the Coup

The September coup was instigated by a group of disaffected captains and lieutenants, one of the more influential of whom was Qadhafi. During the regime of King Idris these officers had formed a "free officers" clique. Most of them are radical, puritanical and nationalistic, and look to Nasir as their ideal.

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These officers moved early on the morning of 1 September to topple the monarchy and establish the Libyan Arab Republic. Within three days they were in control. At the time Qadhafi was a first lieutenant stationed with a Signal Corps unit in Benghazi. He rallied other officers who he believed were loyal to him, and together they occupied the Benghazi radio station and seized the armored cars belonging to the police. Qadhafi acted as spokesman for the group in Benghazi until he left for Tripoli.

Qadhafi and other members of the "free officers" then formed the RCC to rule as a collective body. Initially, individual members chose to remain anonymous, claiming they did not want to establish a cult of personality; more likely, they did not wish to be individually identified until they were certain of the effectiveness of the coup. When the names of the RCC members were released, Qadhafi, who had been promoted to captain one day after the coup and to full colonel a week later, was identified as chairman. Because of his present position, it seems likely that Qadhafi was one of the key instigators of the coup. His followers and admirers tend to attribute the success of the coup to Qadhafi, but he maintains that the success was due to the collective action of the "free officers" group.

In a series of speeches Qadhafi has defined the goals of the coup as freedom, socialism (which he changed to justice in a later speech), and unity (of all the Arabs). In advocating socialism for Libya, Qadhafi has explained that it is not necessary to nationalize industry but only to distribute the oil income fairly. Qadhafi has indicated that the relationship between labor and the RCC will be direct and close with no need for unions of the traditional kind. According to Qadhafi, there will be no need for political parties. The RCC, however, will not discriminate against those who might have belonged to political organizations in the past.

- 2 -

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Qadhafi's appeals to Libyan and Arab nationalism have made him popular; he is one of the few leaders in Libya's history who have shown an interest in establishing a dialogue with the people. He has met with both labor and student groups and has tried to answer their questions instead of evading them (although at times his answers have been circumlocutory). In his speeches, Qadhafi uses vernacular rather than classical Arabic--another factor which further identifies him with the common man.

Post-Coup Government

Soon after its establishment the RCC appointed a Cabinet to handle the administrative functions of government but retained for itself the right to make policy decisions. The Cabinet portfolios, with the exception of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior, were given to civilians. At first the military-oriented RCC and the civilian-oriented Cabinet worked well together, but both groups soon became disenchanted with each other. As early as mid-September, Qadhafi was dissatisfied with the performance of the civilian Prime Minister, Mahmud al-Maghrabi. The members of the Cabinet, in turn, were disillusioned with Qadhafi's leadership and called him a dictator for his stringent and narrow policies.

In mid-December, after denigrating them in public, Qadhafi removed Minister of Defense Aadam Said al-Hawaz and Minister of Interior Musa Ahmad al-Hasi from their posts and arrested them. (In the first week of December Qadhafi had gone to Cairo, and while he was there President Nasir advised him to remove al-Hawaz and al-Hasi because the UAR intelligence service had information that they were Communists. Nasir may have called them Communists to provoke Qadhafi into action; both al-Hawaz and al-Hasi were "Libya firsters," in contrast to Qadhafi who was more pro-UAR.) On 16 January 1970 Qadhafi dismissed Prime Minister Maghrabi and assumed the post himself. At the same time the RCC appointed Qadhafi Minister of Defense.

- 3 -

~~SECRET~~~~No Foreign Dissem~~

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Attitude Toward the West

Immediately after the coup, Qadhafi announced his desire for friendly relations with the United States--possibly fearing US support of a counter-coup. About the end of November 1969, however, when he felt secure in his position, he called for the early evacuation of American and British bases, claiming that they were the result of the previous regime's policies and that there was no longer any justification for them in the new Libya.

In an interview with a Lebanese correspondent which was later published in Beirut's *An-Nahar*, Qadhafi said, "We do not have faith in the people of the United Kingdom or the United States; they will have to prove their good intentions with deeds over a long period of time before we can believe them." He then initiated discussions with the Americans and British for the removal of their bases. (According to British military authorities, when Qadhafi was in the United Kingdom for military training in 1966, he claimed that he favored British troops remaining in Libya.)

In an interview with French journalists in mid-September 1969, Qadhafi called France a friend for suspending arms deliveries to Israel and expressed hope for closer relations with France.

Relations With Other Arab States

Qadhafi has been pro-UAR since his high school days. He was expelled from the Sebha high school in 1961 for leading a student demonstration in a protest over the dissolution of the Egyptian-Syrian union. He was not outspokenly pro-UAR during the early years of his military career, but after his position in the post-coup government was assured, he began overtures toward a closer Libyan-Egyptian rapprochement.

Other delegates to the Arab Summit Conference held in Rabat in December 1969 remarked that Qadhafi was completely subservient to President Nasir.

- 4 -

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Qadhafi opposed the more conservative Arab states that he thought were blocking Arab unity which he claimed was inevitable. One Arab journalist reporting on the conference said that Qadhafi made unrealistic demands on the Iraqi and Algerian delegations. He tried to tell Algerian President Houari Boumediene how many tanks, guns, troops, etc. Algeria should send to fight Israel. Boumediene rebuffed Qadhafi, stating that he would speak for Algeria. The Jordanian delegation, on the other hand, thought that Qadhafi was the outstanding delegate at the conference, giving the impression of a strong, courageous personality.

Disillusioned by the lack of unanimity among the delegates, Qadhafi returned to Tripoli calling the conference a failure. He retained his faith in Arab unity, but after the conference he was not convinced of its inevitability. Late in December he was host to tripartite talks among himself, Nasir and Sudanese President Ja'far Muhammad Numayri in an attempt to promote some form of union between Libya, Sudan and the UAR.

Early Life and Career

Mu'ammarr Muhammad al-Qadhafi was born in Sirte, Tripolitania, in 1942. His parents are nomadic tent dwellers. His father, a veteran of the pre-independence anti-Italian battles, is a traveling merchant. After completing elementary and secondary schools, Mu'ammarr attended high school in Sebha. After his expulsion from the Sebha high school (as much for his violent temper as for his pro-UAR activities), he finished high school in Misurata. He then studied history for one year at the University of Libya, and in 1963 he entered the Libyan Military Academy in Benghazi. Upon graduation in 1965, Qadhafi was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps.

In 1966 Qadhafi spent nine months in the United Kingdom, where he received advanced communications training. When he returned to Libya he was assigned to the First Signal Squadron in Benghazi. He attained the rank of first lieutenant

- 5 -

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in February 1968, and by August 1969 he was acting adjutant of the Signal Corps. During the time he was in Benghazi, Qadhafi organized a local "free officers" clique which later formed the nucleus of the RCC.

Personal Data

When Qadhafi was in the United Kingdom in 1966, his British sponsors called him cheerful, hard-working and conscientious. Later reports from US officials have described him as uncooperative and hot-tempered. One of his former high school teachers in Sebha said that Qadhafi showed only average intelligence and that he had a stubborn and violent temperament and was never able to distinguish major from minor issues. Since becoming Chairman of the RCC, however, Qadhafi has demonstrated that he can be selective in supporting the important concerns of his subordinates while rejecting their more petty demands. He has also impressed US officials with his thoughtful and unemotional approach to issues.

Qadhafi has termed himself a worker rather than a talker. As chairman of the RCC, however, he has given several long, effective speeches, both to street crowds and within the confines of the RCC.

Several times during the Arab Summit Conference in December 1969 Qadhafi fainted. Many observers thought at the time that it was an over-emotional reaction to decisions of which he did not approve. Upon his return to Tripoli, Qadhafi went into the hospital. His presence there gave rise to rumors (and wishful thinking by his enemies) that he had been either stabbed or shot by a would-be assassin. The assassination rumors stemmed primarily from an Israeli broadcast quoting a Paris correspondent of Radio Jerusalem. Subsequently, however, it was learned that on or about 1 January 1970 Qadhafi underwent an appendectomy.

- 6 -

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In his leisure time, Qadhafi enjoys soccer and reading. He speaks English in addition to his native Arabic.

Family

On 25 December 1969 Qadhafi married Fathia Khalid, daughter of Brigadier Nuri Khalid. (Qadhafi chose UAR President Nasir to be best man at his wedding.) Khalid was chief of the Fezzanese security services before the coup and was the only one of the three provincial police chiefs who declared his support for the new government. Mrs. Qadhafi's brother is officer in charge of the Azizia barracks in Tripoli and is believed to have been one of the leaders of the coup.

- 7 -

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