

Libya, devastated by U.S./NATO bombing, unprepared for extreme storm floods

written by Scott Scheffer
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Floods devastated Derna, Libya.

Blame for the horrible flooding that [has killed nearly 20,000](#) people in the city of Derna, with many thousands still unaccounted for in northeastern Libya, belongs squarely on the doorstep of Western capitalism and the U.S. imperialist military menace. The 2011 U.S.-led NATO war on Libya left the country in a weakened, vulnerable state. This catastrophe, the latest deadly extreme weather event, points more clearly to the link between unbridled U.S. capitalism and militarism and the struggle to mitigate the global warming crisis.

The pursuit of energy profits has been the Pentagon's primary focus ever since the U.S. came out on top of the heap of imperialist powers at the end of World War II. The U.S. military and the various military alliances organized by the U.S. are huge emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs.)

[A 2017 study by researchers at Brown University](#) reported that "U.S. military emissions were greater than the GHGs of entire industrialized countries, such as Sweden, Denmark, and Portugal, and also greater than all CO2 emissions from U.S. production of iron and steel." The U.S. military fought and won the exclusion of military emissions from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol counting process. Now, when lists show the GHGs of various countries, the count is skewed in favor of the U.S.

The GHGs of the Pentagon - shocking and criminal as the statistics may indicate - are not the most significant part of the military's role in worsening global warming. The Pentagon's role as the enforcer of imperialist domination, the plunder of nations, and the poverty that is imposed have left the Global South in such a vulnerable state compared to the big capitalist powers of the U.S., Europe, Japan, and Australia.

The poverty of the Global South is not some natural event. It results from imperialist

plunder and is maintained by the threat posed by the imperialist military.

Gaddafi led overthrow of U.S.-backed monarch

The catastrophe unfolding in Libya can't be fully understood without considering the 2011 U.S.-led NATO assault. Muammar Gaddafi's overthrow of U.S. ally King Idris in 1969 brought about a profound and positive transformation. Gaddafi took back much of the profit and control of the oil industry from Western companies, including British Petroleum, and took a share of foreign banks operating there.

Soon, housing, hospitals, and universities were being constructed, and life expectancy and literacy rates shot up. Education was free and mandatory for all — including, for the first time in modern Libyan history, women. Roads and other infrastructure were built.

Libya became a magnet for people throughout the region — Palestinian refugees and thousands of others seeking a better life migrated to Libya and were welcomed. Gaddafi also threw out the British and U.S. militaries and shut down their bases.

None of this was taken lightly by the imperialist powers. In 2011, they found their moment to strike, taking advantage of uprisings against Gaddafi during the “Arab Spring” that had spread throughout the region. The White House was initially silent but then openly backed arms shipments from Qatar and UAE to counter-revolutionaries.

Demonstrations soon became armed attacks against Gaddafi's forces. The U.S.-armed counterrevolutionaries attacked Black Libyans in Tawergha and Black guest workers from Chad, Senegal, and other countries, lynching hundreds. The Obama/Clinton State Department didn't object. When the Gaddafi forces successfully defended against the attacks, the U.S. organized a NATO assault that carried out nearly 10,000 airstrikes over seven months, about 46 every day for 222 days.

Gaddafi was captured and murdered by the U.S.-supported reactionaries, and the vast improvements made in Libya have now been erased.

Critical response to capitalist climate change

The dams that collapsed last week were part of that wave of infrastructure improvements that had taken place in the 1970s. They didn't exist during the long years of U.S.-backed King Idris' reign. But Gaddafi had put engineers to work to protect people in northeastern Libya from frequent floods.

Storms originating in the Mediterranean were always a threat. But one of the effects of climate change — higher ocean temperatures — has intensified storms and, at the same time, slowed down their movement, sometimes sitting in place for days while dumping vast amounts of rain. Because crucial inspections and maintenance of the dams weren't kept up after NATO's murderous assault destroyed Gaddafi's revolution, the dams were no match for the 22-foot high rush of water that smashed through them and plowed a quarter of the city of Derna into the Mediterranean.

The UN and various groups of scientists have repeatedly warned that the world is not on track to meet even the modest goals set at the Paris Climate talks. The U.S. proxy war against Russia has led to a dramatic increase in GHGs being emitted and opened more projects to extract oil.

Critical international conferences called the Conference of the Parties occur each year. COP28 begins on November 30 in the United Arab Emirates. At the last conference in Copenhagen, an agreement for a "loss and damage fund" was forced on the Western capitalist powers as anger boiled over. The intention was to address the culpability of the U.S. and other capitalist giants in global warming and force them to provide funds for adaptation to those countries that have been so exploited by imperialism that they haven't the funds to evacuate populations, build stronger infrastructure, or recover when agriculture or industry is damaged.

Of course, the fund hasn't been put together yet, and it will be a point of contention at COP28. While they may not become part of the discussion in the United Arab Emirates, the slogans "Abolish the Pentagon" and "Down with U.S. imperialism" need to be popularized in the people's movement to fight against global warming and fossil fuels.

