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WARNING: TOPIC: DOMESTIC ECONOMIC, FOUO, INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL

SERIAL: GMP20090416835004

/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

BODY

COUNTRY: LIBYA

SUBJ: STATE PAO: TRIPOLI MEDIA SUMMARY 15 APR 09 (U//FOUO)

SOURCE: TRIPOLI US EMBASSY PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE IN ENGLISH 15 APR 09 (U//FOUO)

TEXT:

Following is the Libya Media Summary produced by the Public Affairs Office at the US Embassy in Libya. "Inclusion of media reports in this summary in no way constitutes an endorsement by the US Government. PAO Tripoli cannot vouch for the veracity or accuracy of items contained in this report." (U//FOUO)

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Commentary: Obama made right call on rescue

Gazprom officials arrive in Libya

Tunisia: Al Rahil takes cue from OiLibya

Libyan held

VIDEO: Libyan Trade Fair Attracts Thousands

Commentary: Obama made right call on rescue

Ed Rollins: Toughest decisions a president makes relate to the military

By Ed Rollins

CNN Contributor

April 15, 2009

Editor's note: Ed Rollins, a senior political contributor for CNN, was political director for President Ronald Reagan and chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee.

Ed Rollins says President Obama was right to authorize the rescue attempt for a freighter captain held by pirates.

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NEW YORK (CNN) -- A president makes many decisions, but none is more important than those he makes as commander in chief.

Committing young men and women to war zones where their lives are at risk is a decision that can't be easily reversed, and the consequences can be fatal.

The second type of difficult decision a president faces is setting the rules of engagement; allowing American troops to do their job even if that means taking the life of the enemy.

Ronald Reagan, a president I served, was beloved by the American military. He rebuilt a military crippled by the nightmare of Vietnam. After the humiliating evacuation from that costly war, we had planes that couldn't fly and ships that couldn't sail due to missing parts and deferred maintenance.

Equally upsetting, we had underpaid sailors, soldiers and Marines, many who were on food stamps and many more using and selling recreational drugs to escape their demoralized state of mind.

That changed, beginning in 1981, and today we have the most professional and competent military in the world. But every bit as important as more pay and better equipment was that our military knew that President Reagan was in their corner and was going to let them do their job.

That was epitomized by an incident on August 18, 1981, when two United States F-14s, flying off the carrier USS Nimitz, shot down two Soviet-made Su-22 fighters of the Libyan air force during naval maneuvers off the coast of Libya.

The "madman" leader of Libya, Col. Moammar Gadhafi, had declared that any U.S. plane that came within 200 miles of the coast of Libya, "The Line of Death," would be shot down. International law said a country's border was only 12 miles off the coast. Before the exercises began, in international waters, the Navy asked the president in the Oval Office what the rules of engagement were. "Our pilots are free to shoot back at anyone who fired at them," Reagan answered. "What about 'hot pursuit,' " a Navy admiral asked. "Suppose the Libyan planes shoot at ours and then flee back into Libyan territory. Do you authorize us to follow them?" "You can follow them back into their own damn hangars if you have to!" Reagan responded.

Within hours, that story had joyfully spread throughout the Pentagon, and the military knew it had a leader who would back them up.

President Obama's authorization of Saturday's hostage rescue of Captain Richard Phillips, and the justified killing of three

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Somali pirates by Navy SEAL sharpshooters, took real courage and was certainly the right decision.

Anything less, and his administration would have been second-guessed and the military high command would have been left to wonder what kind of man was leading our nation and our military. A brave American hero's life was at stake, and the president and the Navy made the right decisions. There are, and will be, many things our new president and I will disagree on. But so far, I applaud what he has done regarding our armed services.

His first decision -- to keep Secretary of Defense Robert Gates -- was the best he could make. Gates is one of the finest public servants this country has ever had, and his service to Democratic and Republican presidents has been outstanding.

/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 2 *****/

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He was the first person to start at the entry level in the CIA and rise from the ranks to be the director. He served two tours of duty in the White House on the national security team and is a Russia and China expert.

When he took over the Defense Department from the insufferable Donald Rumsfeld, the former Eagle Scout and Texas A&M University president quickly restored morale among the generals and the troops. He rebuilt confidence among the congressional leaders that had been lost during the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Shortly after his appointment as the 22nd secretary of defense, he removed the secretary of the Army and the Army surgeon general over the Walter Reed Army Medical Center neglect scandal. He later removed the secretary of the Air Force and the Air Force chief of staff over errors in the shipment of nuclear weapons. And he shook the entire military structure when he did not recommend the chairman of the Joint Chiefs for a second term. Accountability was the message sent from top to bottom at the Pentagon. He has also carefully guided the new president through a withdrawal plan for Iraq and an enhanced program to deploy more troops to Afghanistan.

I am not a defense expert and never served in the military. But the secretary's new defense budget seems reasonable, well thought through and, most of all, will serve the men and women in combat today in two combat zones. It also deals with the real threats

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facing our country today and in the near future: terrorism and guerrilla warfare.

Adding strength to Obama's war council is his national security adviser, retired four-star Gen. James Jones, a 40-year veteran, former commandant of the Marine Corps, and winner of a Silver Star and the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the United States' highest peacetime defense award.

Jones, a Vietnam War platoon and company commander, also was commander of the United States European Command and the supreme allied commander Europe. He is a tough, smart and no-nonsense leader. You don't get four stars on your shoulders in the Marine Corps unless you "can walk on water."

Another major voice who will be responsible for our veterans when they return home is Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, a former four-star general and chief of staff of the Army.

Shinseki was the man who correctly told Congress that Rumsfeld had not committed sufficient troops for the post-war occupation of Iraq. He too is a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War and also the war in Bosnia.

The bottom line is the president has a first-rate team of advisers and he followed their counsel in this hostage crisis. There will be many more tests to come for the president and his team, but the message from this event is that if you harm or capture an American anywhere in the world, you will pay a heavy price.

As one American, I can just say, "Thank you Mr. President!"

The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Ed Rollins.

Gazprom officials arrive in Libya

Published: April 14, 2009 at 9:58 AM

United Press International

TRIPOLI, Libya, April 14 (UPI) -- A high-ranking delegation from Russian gas giant Gazprom arrived Tuesday in Libya to discuss cooperation in the oil and gas sector.

Gazprom chief Alexei Miller led the delegation to visit with Libya's National Oil Corp. Chairman Shukri Mohamed Ghanem as part of an effort to expand the gas giant's market base, the company said in a news release.

Gazprom is working in Libya and North Africa to explore offshore blocks in the Mediterranean and onshore areas south of Tripoli.

In 2007 the Russian gas monopoly took a minority share in oil concessions from German companies that include nine additional fields in Libya through 2026.

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Miller and his Libyan counterpart discussed trends in the oil and gas sector, saying the current climate suggested more work was needed to improve marketing mechanisms.

Gazprom works in Libya under a specialized company, Gazprom Libya, that is licensed to operate in the country.

Tunisia: Al Rahil takes cue from OiLibya.

African Manager

April 15, 2009

According to Amer Miled Abou Saada, Director of Planning of Al Rahil 'second fuel distributor in Libya, the company is planning to establish in Tunisia.

Met at the SIPS (Oil and services International exhibition) held in Hammamet , the Libyan executive confirmed that his company is eyeing the Tunisian market, and that his participation in this Exhibition is part of prospecting this market.

The scheduled access to the Tunisian market is one of "AlRahila" 2010-2013 five-year plan. Two possibilities are on the agenda, the first is to find a strategic partner running already gas stations or building its own filling stations network.

Libyan held

Malta Independent

April 15, 2009

The police are holding a Libyan who was found with heroin and cannabis resin on Sunday afternoon. They had been holding him under watch for several days, after they were informed that the man was trafficking drugs in Bugibba.

/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 3 *****/

The police said the 33-year-old man was stopped by anti-drugs police who found some 30 grammes of heroin in his car. A search at his apartment yielded some 250 grammes of cannabis resin, hidden in the kitchen.

The suspect is to be arraigned in court today, to be charged with trafficking and aggravated possession of drugs.

VIDEO: Libyan Trade Fair Attracts Thousands

L.M.B./Reuters

Published: April 14, 2009 08:41h

[http://www.javno.com/cn-lifestyle/video--libyan-trade-fair-attract-s-thousands\(-UNDERSCORE-\)250825](http://www.javno.com/cn-lifestyle/video--libyan-trade-fair-attract-s-thousands(-UNDERSCORE-)250825)

After years of sanctions lifted six year ago, Libya hosts an international trade fair hoping to attract foreign investment and expertise.

But it wasn't always like this.

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Libya was the subject of sanctions for years which were lifted six years ago.

Now this trade fair in the capital Tripoli has attracted exhibitors from 33 countries.

It's seen as an important opportunity for the Libyan government and private sector companies to meet representatives from 1,000 foreign companies and sign deals with them.

Libya hopes it will also attract foreign investment and expertise to help modernise its infrastructure and oil industry.

- The high presence of African countries in this fair is very important and we worked hard to invite all the African countries to participate. We all know that the strategic market for Libyan products is Africa - the fair's director said.

Since sanctions against Libya were lifted by the United Nations Security Council in September 2003, energy-rich Libya has favoured mostly European and Asian companies for multibillion-dollar infrastructure deals.

Libyan officials say the fair attracted more than 30,000 visitors each day and a total of more than 400,000 visitors over the whole nine-day event.

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