



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on June 10, 2011

Libya on \$2 Million a Day: Obama's Illegal War

U.S. taxpayers are being soaked to the tune of \$2 million a day for President Barack Obama's illegal war in Libya, according to a Defense Department memo obtained by the *Financial Times*. The document, entitled "United States Contribution to Operation Unified Protector," says that the government is spending about \$60 million a month on the mission and had spent \$664 million by mid-May.



This is significantly more than the Pentagon had previously suggested the war was costing. In late March Defense Department officials testified to Congress that they had spent about \$550 million on the war, at a rate of about \$40 million per month. In May Defense Secretary Robert Gates estimated that the government would end up shelling out about \$750 million on the war through the end of fiscal year 2011. Clearly the bill is going to be much higher.

The *Financial Times* story also puts the lie to the Obama administration's assurances that the United States would be at the forefront of NATO operations for only "days, not weeks" and that since April 4 U.S. troops have been in a "support," rather than active combat, role:

Although it is working under NATO, the U.S. is by far the largest contributor to operation Unified Protector. As of mid-May it was conducting 70 percent of reconnaissance missions, over 75 percent of refueling flights and 27 percent of all air sorties.

The U.S. has about 75 aircraft, including drones, involved in the operations and since the end of March has conducted about 2,600 aircraft sorties and about 600 combat sorties. ...

In total the U.S. military has fired about 228 missiles as of mid-May.

All this spending is coming out of the Pentagon's existing budget; Congress has not appropriated any funds specifically for the Libyan mission. With legislators of both parties becoming restive over the war, the Obama administration is unlikely to seek such funding either.

As [Fox News](#) points out, news of the escalating cost of the war will make "the challenge of selling Libya [to Congress] even harder." Last week the House of Representatives passed a [resolution](#) that demanded an explanation of the war from Obama and reminded him that Congress might be reluctant to fund the war in the absence of a "compelling rationale" for it. On Wednesday Senators Jim Webb (D-Va.) and Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) introduced a resolution similar to the one that had passed the House. "However," writes Fox News, "this one is tougher in that it calls for the president to seek permission from Congress to remain in Libya."



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Introducing the resolution, Webb [explained](#) the rationale behind it:

When we examine the conditions under which the President ordered our military into action in Libya, we are faced with the prospect of a very troubling historical precedent that has the potential to haunt us for decades. The issue for us to consider is whether a President — any President — can unilaterally begin, and continue, a military campaign for reasons that he alone defines as meeting the demanding standards worthy of risking American lives and expending billions of dollars of our taxpayers' money. It is important for Congress to step in and clearly define the boundaries of our involvement.

Congress should certainly assert its constitutional authority to initiate, define the scope of, and terminate wars. If the President refuses to comply with clear congressional directives, then Congress should also assert its constitutional authority to impeach him.

[Jason Ditz of Antiwar.com](#) summed up the situation in Washington well:

Despite increasingly shrill claims of progress, the war in Libya appears stalemated and destined to last for months, if not years. Britain's defense secretary was up front about this, saying it would probably still be going on past Christmas. For a Congress coping with an already staggering deficit and facing growing doubts about the nation's myriad wars, this may be far too long, and far too expensive, to tolerate.

Photo: Does \$2 million include room service? Corinthia Hotel Tripoli, Libya



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