

Libya: risks of US boldness

YESTERDAY'S US air force and naval attacks on six Libyan command centres and military installations built on its recent naval strikes in the Gulf of Sidra, but they amounted to a far more complex and therefore more contentious military-political operation. The earlier operation aimed to defy and if possible destroy Libya's exaggerated territorial claims to the whole Gulf of Sidra. The US naval build-up was justifiable in terms of international law, and Libya's not totally predictable military response had to be met by US force if the obvious point was to be made. A cool display of superior force made the point to the world, but the US doubted that Colonel Gaddafi really understood its scarcely hidden agenda.

Everyone knew the US picked that earlier fight — but in response to long, flagrant Libyan provocation and only after a campaign for diplomatic and economic sanctions had failed. In the Gulf crisis, the US used one policy objective — the maintenance of freedom of the seas — as a pretext for two larger political objectives. One was its war against international terrorism based on Israeli precedents which the US endorsed but rarely emulated, and against its sponsor-states — with Libya given very high priority, far above Syria, Iran, or the richest terrorist kindergarten, the ex-state of Lebanon.

The second objective was simply to overthrow Colonel Gaddafi's tyranny, not just deter his rampant offshore adventurism — perhaps on the assumption that only his demise will end international terrorism. While implicit in the recent US talks with European and Arab allies, especially Egypt, this aim has not been formulated with the explicitness of the Nicaragua policy, revised by Mr Shultz yesterday. Now, in an operation reminiscent of Israel's attack on Mr Arafat and PLO headquarters near Tunis, the US has attacked

Colonel Gaddafi's personal headquarters, and missed him.

While the US attack on Libya is presented by Mr Reagan as retaliation for the bombing of a West Berlin disco used by US troops, it can only be understood and assessed in the light of these wider internal, regional and global strategic aims. Secret Libyan communications on the West Berlin bombing were intercepted by US intelligence; the intercepts arrived too late for preventive action, Mr Weinberger says, but they conclusively prove that Libya ordered the bombing and Libyan agents did it, including one from East Germany, the nation which supervises Libyan intelligence and the praetorian guard of "the Leader", Gaddafi.

A limited US attack on military-political command centres can easily be understood as a super power's frustrated reply to Libya's wild declaration of war in the Mediterranean, in Europe, the Middle East and at home. But was it operationally justified?

Some critics, with good historical precedents in mind, will question Mr Reagan's reliance on secret intelligence and ask him to table the evidence. This could endanger US intelligence assets, of course. But if US intelligence is inaccurate or only haphazardly accurate, and if the links between international terrorist networks and a few wild Middle East states are more diffuse than official US assessments contend, then the massive US attack on Libya will be counter-productive to the war against terrorism. If the intelligence and targeting of the US were accurate, though, one man above all now knows the fact: Colonel Gaddafi, his domestic and pan-Arab prestige may be boosted, temporarily, by his escape. But he now knows, as the more sensible and sceptical Libyan military chiefs and their Moscow backers know, that Colonel Gaddafi can no longer direct or harbour terrorists with impunity.

The farmers get their package

MR KERIN'S rural package has added \$150 million to this year's Budget miraine: what

because agricultural investment had become a popular way of avoiding tax. The Treasurer was

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Soviet Nazi evidence is suspect

SIR: The Australian Jewish community's efforts in positioning the Federal Government to investigate and bring to justice suspected Nazi war criminals living in Australia is to be welcomed. However, many East European communities in Australia are concerned that Soviet-supplied evidence may be used in such investigations.

The Nazi-hunting section of the

United States Justice Department, the Office of Special Investigations (OSI), has relied heavily on Soviet-supplied evidence. The involvement of a former OSI researcher, J. Loftus, in the presentation of a list of alleged war criminals to the Australian Government has heightened this concern.

It is important to realise that political cases in the Soviet Union are under the control of the KGB, not the courts or the judicial system. Trials against dissidents are considered political or state security cases.

For many years, Soviet Government sources have attempted to discredit East European leaders and organisations in the West by accusing them of

collaboration with the Nazis. Human rights and national independence activities of Baltic and Ukrainian origins have frequently come under attack. In the mid-seventies, when Simon Wiesenthal made statements in defence of Soviet political prisoners, the Soviet press began a vicious campaign of disinformation, accusing him of having worked for German military intelligence during World War II.

The Soviet Union views OSI cases as political or security cases. Thus, collaboration of Western agencies such as the OSI with the Soviet judicial system is, in effect, co-operation with the KGB.

In World War II the Ukrainian

people were caught between two ruthless totalitarian forces — Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia. Individuals who collaborated in Nazi atrocities in the Ukraine must be brought to justice.

But Ukrainians believe, with good justification, that the Soviet Government is determined to crush by means fair or foul Ukrainian opposition within and outside its country. For these reasons, Soviet-supplied evidence cannot be trusted in any investigation of alleged war criminals.

Dr Le Havrylin,
Australian Federation of
Ukrainian Organisations,
Vaughan Street,
Lidcombe.

April 9

Cost of casino

SIR: As a schoolgirl I was taught that certain statements like to rug together and that certain things tend to go hand in hand by preference — take, for example, gambling/drugs/corruption/betting.

Having trained little people to make small bets on their local pokies to shore up State revenue, the Government now offers those same people the opportunity of proceeding to Stage II in learning "how to bet" by joining the big time at the "world's biggest casino". A direct monorail link is planned to wish them Godspeed on their way between outlying suburbs and journey's end at Darling Harbour. Not in quite the same breath but certainly with the same clear-eyed gaze, Mr Wran assures us that his Government is pledged to winning the fight against organised crime/drugs/corruption. Really!

Out of whose pocket will the cost of the casino ultimately come? Into whose pocket will the profit go? While not being a member of either Moral Rearmament or the Festival of Light, I can see what they're getting at.

L. Bruck,
Ben Boyd Road,
Neutral Bay.

April 11

Monorail's speed

SIR: I recently received a glossy brochure on the Darling Harbour monorail entitled *The facts and the figures* — but some of the figures do not add up.

The brochure says that the route will be 3.6 kilometres long, and that the round trip will take about 12 minutes, at an average speed of 33km/h. But 3.6 km in 12 minutes is an average speed of 18km/h, not 33km/h.

Which figure is correct?
W. L. Williams,
Ferry Road,
Glebe.

April 12

Halley's headache

SIR: I have a disease. My neck is stiff and won't move right or left, but only back (Halley's Neck?). My shoulders are sore from banging binoculars for hours on end (Halley's Shoulders?). My red eyes are receding under pockets of puff (Halley's Eyes?). And my knees are riveted from, at first, hours of unaccommodated standing (Halley's Knees?). I am tired and irritable from lack of sleep.

From February 4 I have compiled a Halley's File, starting with the Herald's "Halley rising", then all Ben Sandilands's charts.

At first the dog three doors away barked nervously. What was that suspicious human doing at 4 am?



Lid lifted on penal rubbish tin

SIR: It is a significant step forward from the "ball and chain" mentality when the chairman of the NSW Corrective Services Commission, V. J. Dalton, makes his stance public (Letters, March 26) concerning demands for the reintroduction of capital punishment.

It is also an enlightening milestone in penology when the very boss of the NSW prison system unequivocally states that "jail doesn't deter many offenders". Since Australia's inception as a penal colony, the basic function of a prison has been to warehouse men and break their adult spirit, reducing them to the psychological level of obedient and subservient children — all in the name of rehabilitation.

For 33 years the rehabilitative program of batons and boots reigned

supreme at Her Majesty's Grafton Jail. Then, in 1975, psychological rehabilitation occurred when a concrete coffin called Katingal reigned supreme for the next 2½ years. The end result of Graftons and Katingals can be seen in prison cells and exercise yards throughout this country.

Few men have managed to break the vicious cycle of prison, parole, more prison. Prison has always been society's garbage can, where the community can throw its unwanted refuse and jam a lid on it to, carefully turning a blind eye to what happens inside the garbage can.

G. and A. McDonald (Letters, March 8) have the ultimate solution — reintroduce capital punishment and longer terms of imprisonment.

I have been through 11 years of rehabilitative processes within the

NSW prison system. But if the McDonalds had got their way, I would have sat on "death row" for the next 16 months for a crime I did not commit. How do you justify executing an innocent man under a law-and-order policy?

Ironically, the vicious cycle of prison-parole-prison is being slowly eroded, not by reintroducing capital punishment or longer prison terms, but by a group of former prisoners and a place called the Glebe Half-way House. Former prisoners, society refuse, can there readjust to the outside community without bitterness and animosity, thus breaking this vicious cycle that society complacently ignores.

B. Matthews,
Glebe Point Road,
Glebe.

April 7

council for ignoring policies affecting development proposals. The planners' selectivity amazes us.

They revolve around the capacity of an individual teacher to teach the TPC subject Politics and Government. The

expressed through the acceptance of 87 per cent of TPC students who applied for tertiary entry in 1985.



JOHN
STONE

Why Bob and Paul should stay at home

LAST week the Treasurer slipped off to visit Washington, London and Paris. His departure was notable for its lack of any real justification when our economic problems are mounting daily, and those problems can only be effectively dealt with by decisions in Canberra.

Yesterday the Prime Minister also went overseas. Apart from Washington and London, his safari will include Brussels, Rome and Athens.

It is good to see our self-proclaimed agnostic Prime Minister taking time for an audience with the Pope. No doubt the Athens television footage will do no harm politically within Australia's Greek ethnic community. Otherwise, one might wonder why Mr Hawke is visiting Greece's notably hard-left government.

Treasurers and prime ministers work long hours. Normally I would not begrudge them a holiday, even at some expense to taxpayers. But it is hard to think of two less well-timed journeys. True, Mr Keating and Mr Hawke will meet many interesting people in their respective ports of call.

True, these people will tell them things which, otherwise, they would have to read in our newspapers, or in the bundles of telegrams flooding in every day from our diplomatic posts abroad.

True, the Treasurer at least will have attended two meetings where his counterparts will have discussed the great policy issues confronting the world economy today.

All this is educational. If things back home are running smoothly and the Australian economic ship is steadily on course, there is much to be said for senior ministers travelling overseas to improve their education in this way.

There is nothing to be said for it when that ship is as close to foundering as ours is and when the holes in it can only be plugged at home, not abroad. Six weeks ago Mr Keating told Cabinet what a mess the Government's policies are in. He and the Minister for Finance, Senator Walsh, told ministers what some commentators had long been saying.

Our balance of payments deficit is extremely serious. There is a direct connection between that deficit and large borrowing requirements underlying our public finances on both Federal and State levels. And significant cuts in projected expenditures are required if the 1986-87 Budget is to begin addressing those problems. A \$1,400 million target for expenditure cuts was mentioned.

We know all this because a member of the Government thoughtfully sent *The Sydney Morning Herald* a copy of these papers, and this newspaper naturally printed large slabs of them on its front pages. Canberra reports then suggested that Cabinet had asked its expenditure review committee to seek this \$1,400 million target of expenditure cuts. Money markets, which despite their otherwise hard-bitten character seem to lap up such stuff as though it were

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