

# LIBYA RENOUNCES WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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*Libya's decision to give up its weapons of mass destruction programs is a real nonproliferation success story of the new millennium, Assistant Secretary of State for Verification and Compliance Paula DeSutter says. Perhaps the single most telling example of the Libyan strategic change of heart is its decision to convert its notorious Rabta chemical weapons factory into a pharmaceuticals plant to combat infectious diseases.*

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Photo above: President Bush holds a centrifuge component from Libya being shown to him by Jon Kreykes, head of the national security advanced technology group at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. President Bush visited the laboratory July 12, 2004, to examine weapons parts turned over by Libya. (Susan Walsh, AP Wide World Photos)

Libya's public announcement on December 19, 2003, that it was abandoning its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and long-range missile programs was viewed by many with not a little surprise. As the story unfolded, however, it became clear that Libya's historic announcement was an outgrowth of long-term international and U.S. pressure, including economic sanctions and travel restrictions, coupled with a demonstrated U.S. and U.K. ability to collect and act upon detailed intelligence about Libya's WMD and missile programs.

In March 2003, when the United States and its allies were demonstrating their commitment to reducing WMD threats around the world, Libya indicated an interest in discussing WMD issues, and quiet discussions began with British and U.S. officials. In October 2003, the U.S. and its allies interdicted a clandestine shipment of nuclear equipment on its way to Libya.

## UNAMBIGUOUS U.S. EXPECTATIONS

The United States had been publicly raising concerns about Libyan WMD programs for many years. U.S. officials criticized Libya for its chemical weapons program in the 1980s, and at least as early as 1993 the



Among the nuclear weapons-related material that Libya permitted the United States to remove were these centrifuges acquired from Pakistan. (National Nuclear Security Administration)

United States warned publicly that Libya wished to acquire nuclear weapons and “may be attempting to lay the foundation for a more serious effort to produce them.” In 2003, after the defeat of Saddam Hussein’s government in Iraq by coalition forces, the United States continued its warnings about Libya. As Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton stated in his testimony before the House International Relations Committee on June 4, 2003, “We have long been concerned about Libya’s long-standing efforts to pursue nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and ballistic missiles.”

In that same testimony, Bolton set forth a way out for Libya, stating that “Libya must understand that improved relations with the United States means forgoing its WMD and missile programs.” During the course of 2003, the United States and United Kingdom in fact offered Libya the possibility of taking such a path. On December 19, 2003, President Bush clearly stated U.S. policy, observing that “leaders who abandon the pursuit of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, and the means to deliver them, will find an open path to better relations with the United States and other free nations.” Libya’s historic announcement earlier that day made clear that Libya had chosen to take this path.

Among the reasons for Libya’s historic decision was its understanding that pursuit of WMD and support for terrorism brought not security but insecurity. As Colonel

Muammar Qadhafi himself put it in a media interview in February 2004, Libya chose to declare its WMD program to the United States and the U.K. and seek their help in dismantling it “because it’s in our own interest and security.”

### **COMING CLEAN AND WMD-FREE**

There was very little precedent for a country voluntarily eliminating all its WMD and long-range missile programs, but Libya’s clear strategic commitment to fulfilling its December 2003 pledge made this process a success. The sincerity of Libya’s strategic commitment was shown by its actions. Libya invited American and British experts to visit a wide range of sites and gave them access to key program personnel. Libya dismantled its nuclear weapons program, surrendered bomb designs illicitly procured from renegade Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan, and allowed its most advanced missiles, the Scud-Cs, to be removed promptly. Libya joined the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), destroyed thousands of unfilled chemical munitions under international supervision, and began the process of destroying its chemical weapons stockpile pursuant to CWC rules. Libya also committed itself to the staged elimination of its remaining long-range missile force of Scud-Bs.

Libyan cooperation was extremely good. Libyan officials answered questions with candor and volunteered information that provided valuable insight into the global proliferation network. During the course of this cooperative Libyan/U.S./U.K. elimination project, the Libyans demonstrated the good faith of their December 2003 commitment. They made themselves a model for the cooperative return of an isolated state to the broader international community through the verifiable elimination of illicit WMD and long-range missile programs. Libya’s clear strategic commitment to a new path also illustrated the centrality of demonstrable cooperation and good faith to verifying the fulfillment of such promises.

### **THE BENEFITS OF A SOUND DECISION**

It is also important to recognize that Libya’s decision was not an easy one, and that providing the transparency shown by Libya required wisdom, discipline, and sincere commitment. Libya had previously believed its pursuit of WMD and missile programs was essential to its national security strategy, and it had invested large amounts of



Cameramen film the control room of Libya's Tajura Nuclear Reactor east of Tripoli, January 26, 2004. U.S. congressmen and journalists toured the 10-megawatt reactor site east of Tripoli where Libyan scientists had been doing research since 1983. (John Moore, AP Wide World Photos)

money in these programs for many years. It could not have been easy for Libya to decide to seek new ways to ensure its security. Likewise, it could not have been easy for Libya voluntarily to open up some of its most sensitive facilities to foreign experts. But Libya did all these things—and is more secure today for it.

The United States and the United Kingdom did not offer specific promises or rewards to Libya. We promised only that Libya's good faith, if shown, would be reciprocated—and that renouncing WMD would be a path to improved relations with the rest of the world. In effect, therefore, we held out the most attractive incentive available: the opportunity for Libya to reap the benefits that naturally flow from participating more fully in the community of nations.

Those benefits have turned out to be substantial. Libya has received many tangible benefits from better relations with the United States and the United Kingdom. The United States, for example, is no longer enforcing some of its most important sanctions against Libya, including travel restrictions and trade in oil and other important industries. Already, hundreds of millions of dollars in oil contracts have been made with private American firms. On the diplomatic front, the United States has opened a liaison office in Tripoli, and Libya has opened offices in Washington. Libya now participates in international meetings like those held by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and in connection with the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. It participates not as a

pariah nation, but as a genuine partner in the pursuit of the laudable goals of these organizations.

### **CHEMICAL WEAPONS PLANT WILL COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA**

The United States and Britain have sent doctors and experts in biosafety and biosecurity matters to assist the Libyans in their efforts to modernize and redeploy their scientific and health care industries. In addition, we continue to assist in redirecting Libyan scientific efforts from WMD toward more productive activities with the full support of the international community. With Italian assistance—and thanks to an international diplomatic effort led by the United States to enact a technical change to the Verification Annex of the CWC—the Libyans are converting the infamous Rabta plant, under international supervision, from a chemical weapons factory to a pharmaceutical plant that will produce anti-malaria and anti-HIV/AIDS drugs for sub-Saharan Africa.

The United States government has used all of the tools at its disposal to change dramatically the cost-benefit calculations of rogue countries and proliferators around the world. We have penalized proliferators by aggressively imposing sanctions on them; we have coordinated with like-minded friends to improve our collective abilities to interdict WMD-related shipments; and we have shown ourselves more than willing to take dramatic action—even to the point of deposing a cruel dictator in Iraq who had previously used chemical weapons on his own people and would not hesitate to do so again if he had the capability. These new realities were recognized by Qadhafi who, explaining his dramatic decision to abandon his WMD programs, said in February 2004 “there are new realities. We are adapting to the new realities.” The United States and the international community have welcomed and applauded his decision, and the Libyan people are benefiting from the wisdom of this choice.

Libya's strategic commitment is a model, and presents a roadmap, for rogue countries that have been appropriately isolated by the international community due to their pursuit of WMD. The Libyan model shows a path out of this isolation achievable by making a genuine commitment to verifiably eliminating such dangerous weapons. ■