

UK jets bomb Gaddafi hometown bunker

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London, Aug 26: British Tornado jets fired precision-guided missiles against a large bunker in Libyan leader Col Muammar Gaddafi's hometown of Sirte, the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) has said. The Tornados took off from RAF Marham in Norfolk on a long-range strike mission on Thursday night.

Libyan rebels are also building up their forces on the road to Sirte, sending tanks and rocket launchers.

Rebel leaders have appealed to foreign governments to unfreeze Libyan funds.

The UN has already agreed to release \$1.5bn (£1bn) in Libyan assets - which had been frozen under sanctions - to help with immediate humanitarian needs.

In a statement, the MoD said "a formation of Tornado GR4s... fired a salvo of Storm Shadow precision-guided missiles against a large headquarters bunker" in Sirte.

The bunker housed a command and control centre. There is no indication that Col Gaddafi was in Sirte or in the bunker itself at the time of the attack.

"It's not a question of finding Gaddafi, it's ensuring the regime does not have the capability to continue waging war against its own people," Defence Secretary Liam Fox told the BBC.

"The attack that we launched on the bunker in Sirte last night was to make sure that there was no alternative command and control should the regime try to leave Tripoli."

Meanwhile, the rebels are building up their forces around the town of Bin Jawad, preparing for an assault on Sirte, about 100km (60 miles) to the west.

The BBC's Paul Wood, who is with the rebels, says their mood is still buoyant, despite running into unexpectedly stiff resistance.

Rebel commanders think the fighting on the road to Sirte could last another three or four days, our correspondent says.

Another report adds: The UN human rights chief warned Friday against bounty hunters who may be seeking to kill Libyan leader Moamer Gaddafi, saying that all assassinations are "not within the rule of law."

"The rule of law is essential. That applies to Gaddafi as well as everybody else," said Rupert Colville, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a response to a question on the \$1.67 million reward put on Khadafi's head, dead or alive. "Clearly, rule of law would apply to summary executions. Summary execution is not permissible in peace time or in war time," he stressed.

Libyan rebels on Wednesday put a price of two million dinars (\$1.67 million, 1.2 million euros) on the head of strongman Moamer Gaddafi, dead or alive.

Rebel leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil, in Tripoli, also offered an amnesty to "members of (Gaddafi's) close circle who kill him or capture him."

Colville said that the "best solution" would be to capture Gaddafi alive and follow through with the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court.

In addition, he called on "all people in positions of authority, including field commanders in Libya, to take action to ensure that no crimes or acts of revenge are committed."

Meanwhile, The African Union should support efforts for an inclusive transition in Libya, after a months-long rebel onslaught brought down Moammar Gaddafi's regime, a senior AU official urged Friday.

AU Commission chief Jean Ping said the armed struggle was nearing an end and that the pan-African body should support the Libyan people to move to the next stage.

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“It is now clear that the military phase of the conflict is about to end,” said Ping at the opening of an AU Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa over the Libyan crisis, attended by only three African leaders.

“On this new phase that’s opening in Libya, we have to stand by the Libyan people and continue to engage them with the same determination.”

“Now more than ever, we have to make efforts to ensure an inclusive and consensual transition to lead us to elections that will allow the Libyan people to freely choose their leaders,” Ping said, without specifying exactly who that will involve. BBC online