

## **Special Briefing by Reuben Brigety, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and Mark Bartolini, USAID Director of Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance**

### **Current U.S. Humanitarian Assistance Efforts in Libya**

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**MS. FULTON:** Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for joining us for our special press briefing today. We have with us Mark Bartolini, who is the director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance at USAID, and Reuben Brigety, who is a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. They're going to talk to you today about the current ongoing humanitarian assistance efforts pertaining to Libya. I'm going to turn it over to each of our speakers to make a brief statement, and then we'll take some questions. So just to clarify, this is on the record, and we'll go from there.

So, Mark.

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Great. Sure. Well, good afternoon, everyone. Let me just start by saying that I'll be fairly brief in my comments, but I'm happy to answer questions and get into it a little more thoroughly if you'd like.

So we continue – the United States Government continues to provide aid to the people of Libya. To date, we've committed \$47 million toward humanitarian assistance. There have been some optimistic changes over the last two or three days, but conditions continue to be difficult to assess in many areas due to security.

In Misrata, as you've heard, there's been some pullback of forces; however, there's still intense shelling of the city. And you've seen the reports that 32 people were killed on Saturday and 8 people were killed on Sunday. We don't have verification of those numbers, but we know that shelling is continuing.

In general, conditions in the east, around the Benghazi area, are remaining stable. There's not significant humanitarian needs there; however, we are doing a significant amount of pre-positioning and we've been working with a number of partners, both international organizations and nongovernmental organization partners, for about a month now in terms of trying to build capacity of organizations that heretofore have not experience operating in Libya.

In the west, we have some significant concerns, and we have, again, sort of limited visibility in some areas due to security issues. But some of our partners are getting in periodically and delivering aid. And that's also, as you know from press reports, been the case in Misrata as well. The International Committee of the Red Cross, IOM has been taking third-country nationals out of the port. We estimate right now there are approximately 2,000 remaining in the port, between 1,500 and 2,000, and IOM is continuing – is planning on doing another trip in to remove those people, evacuate those people.

We know there are some medical needs in Misrata, in particular doctors who are operating in these surgical theaters are quite exhausted, so we're rotating doctors with some of our partners, bringing in their staff. And there are ongoing medical needs. We continue to, however, get supplies in. One of the problems is that we've had to move around medical supplies and food supplies in Misrata because of attacks by pro-government forces and there's been some logistics issues around that. So we are, also through our partners, providing some logistical support to try to better facilitate that.

One other issue that I'll mention is that we're pleased to announce today that the first shipment of Food for Peace, Title II food, arrived in Alexandria today. And that will be, through WFP's logistical supply routes in the region, be deployed to – pre-deployed to certain areas in and around Libya.

And I'll turn it over to Reuben.

**MR. BRIGETY:** Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I'm going to talk for just a minute about the nature of the displacement that the conflict in Libya has created.

Since the beginning of the conflict, there has been a substantial and, frankly, slightly unusual displacement of people across the six borders that surround Libya. Some 550,000 people have fled Libya as of April 24th. The nature of that population is slightly unusual from a typical humanitarian crisis in that most of the people who are leaving Libya are not actually nationals of Libya. So what you have are people that are third-country nationals leaving a country that is not their home, going to another country that is not their home.

And as a result of this substantial outflow, the international community, organized through the International Organization of Migration and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, launched a substantial humanitarian air bridge, as it were, to help evacuate many tens of thousands of these people back to their home countries. That process continues. This is one of the largest international humanitarian airlifts in history. The current outflow of people as of today is about 5,000 people, again, across the majority of those six borders. The majority of those 5,000 are coming across into Tunisia and into Egypt.

The U.S. Government has committed some \$47 million worth of assistance to Libya thus far: \$13 million to the International Organization of Migration to support the humanitarian air evacuation; \$10 million to the World Food Program for various food operations; another 7 million to UNHCR mainly to support the camp populations, mostly in Tunisia and Egypt, of third-country migrants, another 7 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross; and then another \$10 million to support NGOs as needed.

I'm happy to – as I mentioned, I'm happy to talk in more detail and answer any questions you have regarding displacement of migrants and refugees as you're interested. Thank you.

**MS. FULTON:** Okay. With that, we'll be happy to take questions.

**QUESTION:** Sir, how do you plan on distributing the humanitarian aid that you will send to the areas where it is under – not under the control of Qadhafi?

**MR. BRIGETY:** You mean inside Libya?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Inside Libya?

**QUESTION:** Inside Libya.

**MR. BARTOLINI:** We're working with a number of partners, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, with the International Federation of Red Cross Societies, and also with a number of NGO partners. And they're operational, as I mentioned earlier, both in the east and sporadically in the west.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up on that?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Because I know some NGOs who don't have USAID contracts are having trouble getting in because of old lingering OFAC requirements. Have you had to deal with that at all? Has that been a problem?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Actually, I'm not aware of that because there were OFAC issues prior to the start of this conflict, but there is a humanitarian carve out for humanitarian assistance<sup>1</sup>. So if anyone is having a problem they should certainly approach our office.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. Just to be clear, 47 million committed for humanitarian assistance, and then is additional money for refugees or is that all – 47 total?

**MR. BRIGETY:** That's 47 total.

**QUESTION:** And out of that, how much has been dispensed? How much of that has actually hit the ground?

**MR. BRIGETY:** The 13 million to IOM has been dispensed. That's been dispensed for some time, as has the 7 million to UNHCR and the 7 million to ICRC. Do you want to discuss the contributions to World Food Program?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Yeah. I would say it's pretty close to all of it. OFDA has dispensed about \$8 million of \$10 million that it's currently applied toward this crisis. And as I mentioned, the first Title II shipment has arrived, so that's close to the \$10 million that's been pledged on that front.

**QUESTION:** So then what's next? How much more? When? What's in the pipeline?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Well, we're looking at that now and we haven't come up with a firm number, but there will need to be increases, certainly, to continue our operations going forward.

**MR. BRIGETY:** And if I may add something to that, we have worked very closely with our partners or other donor governments around the world to support the overall humanitarian effort. The UN Flash Appeal, as of today, is for \$311 million to support humanitarian operations in and around Libya. Only 42 percent of that has been met by the international community. So obviously, we continue to look at our own resources and we continue to encourage other governments to do the same to ensure that humanitarian needs are met for this population.

**QUESTION:** Just a very quick follow-up. The 25 million that was announced last week but in non-lethal aid to the rebels, what – doesn't that come out of the PRM account? Isn't that disaster response accounts?

**MR. BRIGETY:** No.

**QUESTION:** Can you explain where – what's (inaudible)?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** That's not out of either of our disaster response accounts.

**MR. BRIGETY:** Non-lethal assistance, as I understand it, is not humanitarian, and since that is not meant to meet the emergency lifesaving needs of the population, that 27 million – I clearly would have to refer you to other parts of the government. That 27 million is for things other than supporting the immediate needs of the civilian population.

**QUESTION:** You mentioned that you saw some signs – encouraging signs or hopeful signs in the start of your remarks. What – can you expound a little bit on that? What exactly is changing for the better there, and is it likely to continue getting better?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Well, there was encouragement over the situation in Misrata in terms of street fighting, a cessation of street fighting, with government forces pulling back. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, there's also continued shelling. But we're hopeful that will at least allow us to access it a little more easily. And then in the west, we continue to have a little better visibility through access in the west than we had in previous weeks.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry. What do you mean, "access to visibility"? What does that mean?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Well, one of the border towns, Wazin, has changed control and there's been better access going through that border point into the west, into the western mountain areas, where we know there are a number of humanitarian needs.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up on an earlier question? Do you envisage a situation where the humanitarian aid is sort of dispensed by armed escort of any kind, whether it's contractors or the U.S. military at one point, to safeguard it?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** To my knowledge, and I say that's to my knowledge, it's not – there are no military escorts right now.

**MR. BRIGETY:** If I may add on to that, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance, UN OCHA, has consistently said that they do not see a need for the support – for military support for delivery of humanitarian assistance inside Libya at this point. They continue to ask for respect of the Oslo guidelines, which call for the use of military assistance only in a last resort. And as Mark said, we certainly have not had any indication that humanitarian assistance will be required to be delivered under armed escorts at the moment.

**QUESTION:** Despite the fact that Muammar Qadhafi has said that he's going to attack even if – even humanitarian shipments, and he is – I mean, he's made that clear declaration that – that doesn't concern you?

**MR. BRIGETY:** Of course, it concerns us. And we continue to call for not only humanitarian access throughout Libya but also that the humanitarian actors be respected for their neutrality. But to that point, again, one of the things that UN OCHA has called for – and I, obviously, encourage you to talk with them directly – is for the humanitarian operation to remain civilian in nature and civilian in character, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which so that aid does not become associated with one side to the conflict or the other.

**QUESTION:** Can you explain just a little bit more about the shipment that arrived in Alexandria today? What exactly is it?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** It's – I can tell you specifically with my glasses on: 560 metric tons of vegetable oil and 270 metric tons of pinto beans.

**QUESTION:** Can you just repeat that? I'm sorry. It was noisy.

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Sure, 560 metric tons of vegetable oil and 270 metric tons of pinto beans is included in the shipment.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, which (inaudible)?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** That'll be distributed by WFP, and in likelihood it'll fill up existing stockpiles and also go to areas that have been determined in need inside Libya.

**QUESTION:** Do we know what areas those are yet?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** I can't say right now. Right now, we know the situation in Misrata. There is no need for further food aid at this point. We feel that stockpiles are sufficient. In the west, we know there are some needs.

**QUESTION:** Could you just put a finer point on the situation in Misrata in terms of the evacuees and the wounded and how you're working with NGOs, just kind of flesh that out a little bit?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Well, there's been ships that have been able to access the port and those ships have brought medical supplies, they've brought doctors, and they've also done medical evacuations. And some of those evacuations have gone back to Benghazi and then they've been forwarded on to various places for further medical care.

**MR. BRIGETY:** And with regard to the evacuations thus far, as of today, we know of about 2,000 third-country nationals that are in Misrata that require evacuation. As Mark said, there are ships that are coming in that are bringing in relief supplies, and some of those ships are also being used to evacuate people out. The evacuation on the ground in Misrata is being organized by local Misrata councils in order to help determine who's going out first. Obviously, they're focusing first on both third-country nationals and people that are wounded, et cetera.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, Mark. Mary Beth Sheridan from Washington Post. Just one quick follow-up on the Food for Peace. So it sounds like at this moment the U.S. food aid is not actually being – or is not about to be distributed soon, right? A lot of it sounds like it's being pre-positioned. Is that accurate?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** That's correct. I think there has been some distributions, but the bulk of it right now is being pre-positioned.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry. For what? Or what does the –

**MR. BARTOLINI:** For ongoing needs. There's concerns that supply chains will start breaking down if the conflict continues, and so we want to make sure that we've been able to stockpile enough food in order to give – stay two to three months leeway in order to continue a pipeline.

**QUESTION:** So the food that's in Alexandria is not going to head in anytime in the next several days, at this point?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Some of it definitely will get in. A lot of the stockpiling is taking place inside Libya.

**QUESTION:** Do you happen to know if there are any Americans that are in Libya at this point that are trying to get out and have any numbers on that? I know it's a tough question always.

**MR. BARTOLINI:** That is a tough question. Obviously, there are Americans that are being held hostage. And then there are – we have our own staff members in, a Disaster Assistance Response Team. And then there's a special envoy, obviously. And as far as I know, and I'm sure there are reporters in as well, but those are the only Americans I'm aware of.

**QUESTION:** Sorry. Who are the Americans being held hostage?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** There's a – isn't there an American journalist?

**QUESTION:** There's two reporters –

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Two.

**QUESTION:** I heard they were arrested. I've never heard anyone call them hostages.

**MR. BARTOLINI:** I'm sorry. I misstated, then. Arrested, yes.

**QUESTION:** Could you talk about your interactions with the Libyan opposition government and the Libyan Government as you go about doing these things? What's your level of interaction with them and what – how do they help or hinder you?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Well, our Disaster Assistance Response Team is based in Benghazi, and they are having daily contact with the TNC, and relations are cooperative. We've been able to get quite a bit of information from them regarding the humanitarian needs that they're aware of inside the country, being able to follow up with our partners. On the Tripoli side, we have not had contact with Tripoli, but the UN has. And that was another bit of bright news that I should've mentioned, that a UN team is getting ready to deploy inside Tripoli for humanitarian purposes.

**QUESTION:** Because the – when you say that the UN has been in touch with Tripoli, how is the government – is the government cooperating with delivery of humanitarian aid?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Well, there was a question earlier about threats have been made against the delivery of aid, and we do take that very seriously, but to date we've not had any incidents. So that's encouraging, and we hope that will continue. And so long as there aren't incidences, we feel comfortable in continuing, sort of pushing the envelope in getting aid in.

**QUESTION:** But – sorry, I'm Elise with CNN. Have you gotten any kind of guarantees from the government in terms of access for humanitarian workers or delivery of aid?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** We know – I'm sorry – we know that there were discussions about humanitarian corridors, but those have been discussions. We haven't seen anything finalized in terms of a formal arrangement.

**QUESTION:** Does the food aid have "Made in USA" markings on it?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** Of this – the total 47 million, when was the last contribution to that on?

**MR. BRIGETY:** We – I have to – we'll have to go back and get that number for you.

**QUESTION:** We're talking about stuff that's weeks old, though, right? What is new today is just this shipment of pinto beans and vegetable oil to Alexandria, but that was included – but that is included in the earlier 47 million, correct?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** That's correct. That's correct, but I would say that the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance set aside \$10 million for this effort, and we still have not reached that threshold. We're getting close. But we're continuing to fund. We've increased the contributions we've made to several of our nongovernmental organizations partners and we're also looking at other international organizations to fund them as well.

**MR. BRIGETY:** If I could add on to that, as I think it's an important point, of that 47 million, 27 million went to support our various multilateral partners, so IOM, UNHCR, and ICRC. Of that – if I may just finish because this is – it's actually a really quite important point, I believe – the \$13 million that we gave to IOM was used, the vast majority of that was used, to support the evacuation of third-country nationals. This is a hugely expensive enterprise. We're talking about flying people from Tunisia back to Bangladesh, to Vietnam, to portions of sub-Saharan Africa, et cetera.

I would also say – so when you ask about these things that are weeks old, there are the issues of commodities, which you mentioned, but the – that 27 million also is used to help support the international architecture for humanitarian aid through our major multilateral partners, which is one of the reasons, frankly, that the humanitarian assistance operation continues to go as well as it does, as a result of this work that these organizations are doing and as a result of the support that we and other donors are giving to them. I'm sorry (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** And I wasn't trying to be critical. I'm just trying to figure out when the last amount – when the last contribution was announced while they –

**MR. BRIGETY:** Sure. We can get the exact date<sup>2</sup> --

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then just the last thing: On the WFP, did – are they ones who say what they need and then you ship them that – you ship that to – you ship that stuff? They say we need 270 metric tons of pinto beans and then –

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Those numbers are derived from assessments that are being done on the ground.

**QUESTION:** Right, but I mean in terms of the actual commodity, I mean, 200 just –

**QUESTION:** Seems like a lot of pinto beans.

**QUESTION:** It's a lot of beans.

**QUESTION:** Did they ask for specific things?

**QUESTION:** Did they ask for pinto beans?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** We're stockpiling food that we think is culturally appropriate and relevant to any future needs that may arise. This is emergency stocks of food, so it would be used in cases when the supply lines – if they do break down.

**QUESTION:** No, I understand –

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- but does WFP make a specific request for something or do they just say give us what you got.

**MR. BARTOLINI:** No, there's a discussion about what's available and what's appropriate.

**QUESTION:** Just back to what you were talking about, the evacuation of the third-country nationals, do you take them onward to the third country?

**MR. BRIGETY:** So what happens is IOM and UNHCR have organized evacuation operations principally out of Tunisia and out of Egypt, although there were a couple of others. And they are – have been flown from, say, Tunisia back to their own home countries almost exclusively by chartered commercial – like, civilian chartered aircraft back to various parts of the world.

**QUESTION:** But – I don't know if this is necessarily your patch, but I mean, when Americans – when there are chartered flights for Americans, for instance, to be evacuated out of Tripoli and then onward, they're responsible for reimbursing the U.S. Government. So I'm guessing that these people are not.

**MR. BRIGETY:** I think it probably depends substantially on the home country. What I would say is this. We have called publicly and privately for host governments to continue to support the evacuation of their own citizens. We have not waited for that effort to materialize because, again, for both Tunisia and Egypt, you're talking about two countries that are both very fragile politically at the moment, that have both undergone their own recent transitions.

So what we've tried to do is to continue to have the air bridge continue to be maintained so that you don't have large numbers of third country nationals build up in camps and create the sort of security problems that those sorts of populations might create.

**QUESTION:** You said so far there are about 5,000 that have been evacuated?

**MR. BRIGETY:** No, 5,000 a day that have come across the borders. We have evacuated some – see the number – 100 and – I want to get the number exactly right for you, so let me just pull my notes. It's in excess of 100,000 we've evacuated, but let me get back to you at the end of the brief to make sure you have the exact number.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) is it mainly IOM or also UNHCR?

**MR. BRIGETY:** It's a joint air bridge sponsored by both IOM and UNHCR.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** You said your goal was to avoid buildups of refugees on the Egyptian and Tunisian borders, but we've all seen the reporting that those buildups are – exist and are growing every day. So I'm wondering if you have any efforts whatsoever to deal with that – those situations on those borders and what are your interactions with the Egyptian Government and Tunisian Government to deal with those camps or lack of camps?

**MR. BRIGETY:** Sure. Let me say two things. First of all to go back to your point, the exact number as of today is 117,000 that have been evacuated by air. To your question, and let me just be a little bit precise about language, if I may.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MR. BRIGETY:** So we make a distinction between migrants and refugees. So refugees are people that are fleeing their home country because of a well-founded fear of persecution. And there are some refugees – that is, two-fold, one people that were refugees already in Libya from Eritrea, Sudan, wherever, that have fled. And then there are now an increasing number of Libyans who are fleeing, mainly in the south from the western mountains, as Mark mentioned before.

So the way in which they are being cared for are by transit camps that have been set up, principally in Tunisia. The Government of Tunisia, I have to say, has been fantastic in terms of their hospitality they have provided to these large numbers of people that have come across their border in substantial areas. I should also say the logistics on the ground are also – the topography matters. So the transit camps in Tunisia are only a few kilometers away from the Libyan-Tunisian border, which (inaudible) for only a few more kilometers away from the airport at Djerba, where they're being evacuated. In Egypt, it's a very different situation. The border crossing at Salum is some 250-odd kilometers from the nearest town that has a hotel. So these are very, very remote facilities.

We've been working with the Egyptian Government to ensure that people have sufficient access to shelter, but it, frankly, is taking some time to get those shelters built and have those people cared for appropriately. But we continue to work with both governments, both to ensure rapid evacuation as much as possible and to ensure that people have basic access to health, shelter, whatnot, water in these transit camps.

**QUESTION:** Isn't it true that the Egyptian Government is refusing to build those shelters because they don't want to have permanent migrant or refugee presence on their borders? Isn't that a point of tension between –

**MR. BRIGETY:** Sure. I'll let the Government of Egypt speak for themselves with regard to their motivations. Let me continue to say that we have continued to ask the Government of Egypt to be strong partners in this regard, and we continue to work with them to ensure that happens.

**MS. FULTON:** I think we have time for about two more questions.

**QUESTION:** Is there any food that's actually being distributed in Libya, emergency food aid?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Yes. Food has been distributed in Misrata and in western mountain regions.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) that's not U.S. then, correct?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Yes. U.S. food. Yes.

**QUESTION:** And how is that being distributed?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Through NGO partners and through partners with the World Food Program.

**QUESTION:** Just one clarification. You were talking about contact with the TNC. Is that being done through you? I'm sorry, I don't understand.

**MR. BARTOLINI:** That's being done directly with our Disaster Assistance Response Team that's in Benghazi.

**QUESTION:** And how many people are there in the American team?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** We're not going to say how many. It's not large, but we don't want to go into numbers for security reasons.

**MR. BRIGETY:** If I can also be just a bit precise, I think Mark is absolutely correct that the DART team is interacting with the TNC for humanitarian purposes. Chris Stevens, our special envoy, has been in contact with the special – with the TNC for broader political purposes.

**QUESTION:** But did they do like an assessment? Like, maybe it's a little bit difficult, given the situation, but they do the – kind of initial assessment, right? And then – or they just kind of hit the ground running and – is it based on their needs? Is it based on what the Libyans are saying is their needs or is it based on an assessment done by the DART?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** It's a combination of both. Typically what will happen is we'll certainly hear from the TNC what they feel the needs are and they will ground truth those needs through our partners, and the DART is doing its own assessments as well.

**QUESTION:** How many people are in a typical DART team?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** I'll say that there are 15 DART members in the region right now.

**QUESTION:** And how many are – how many are in a typical –

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Well, there is no real typical DART team. In Haiti, there were over 450 members to the DART, so --

**QUESTION:** Right. But I mean, in terms of – when – let's cast Libya aside, but when an initial team goes out, what's the minimum number of people you need?

**MR. BARTOLINI:** The minimum number that we typically like to send are about six people on a DART. And right now, as I said, there are 15 and that's between Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya.

**MS. FULTON:** Okay. Thank you very much, folks. Appreciate it.

**MR. BARTOLINI:** Thank you.