

Last week the Obama Administration took the United States to war against Libya without bothering to notify Congress, much less obtain a Constitutionally-mandated declaration of war. In the midst of our severe economic downturn, this misadventure has already cost us hundreds of millions of dollars and we can be sure the final price tag will be several times higher.

Why did the US intervene in a civil war in a country that has neither attacked us nor poses a threat? We are told this was another humanitarian intervention, like Clinton's 1999 war against Serbia. But as civilian victims of the US-led coalition bombing continue to add up, it is getting difficult to determine whether the problem we are creating on the ground is worse than the one we were trying to solve.

Though the administration seems to be playing with semantics, calling this a "kinetic military action," let's be clear: this is a US act of war on Libya. Imposing a no-fly zone over the air space of a sovereign nation is an act of war, as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates pointed out before the bombing began. That the administration hesitates to call this war, possibly due to the troubling Constitutional implications, does not mean that it is not one. Article 1 Section 8 of the Constitution could not be clearer: the power and obligation to declare war resides solely in the US Congress.

There was ample time and opportunity for the administration to consult the UN, NATO and the Arab League before going to war, but not the US Congress.

Aside from the manner in which the administration took us to war, it is also troubling that our government has taken a decisive stand for one side of an internal conflict in another sovereign country. The administration speaks out of both sides of its mouth on this, claiming that the US is not attempting to overthrow the Gaddafi regime while clearly benefitting the rebels and stating that Gaddafi must leave. Does this make any sense? Gaddafi may well be every bit the "bad guy" we are told he is, but who are the rebels we are assisting? Do we have any clue? Will they bring freedom and prosperity to Libya if they are victorious? We might like to hope so, but the fact is, we don't know. Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA's Bin Laden unit, explained in a recent article that there is plausible reason to believe the rebels are current or former Islamist mujahedin, eager to engage in jihad. Indeed, Gaddafi has fought against Libyan Islamists for years and is seen by them as a bitter enemy. Astoundingly, it may well be that we are assisting al Qaeda in this new war!

The costs of this terrible mistake cannot be ignored. Congress has been locked in battles over budget cuts and agonizing over ways to save money. Recent proposed spending cuts have by now been completely wiped out with this new war! Will we be rebuilding Libya ten years from now? Will Congress simply roll over and rubber stamp more emergency spending bills for this new war as they have done in the past? We must end our participation in any attack on Libya immediately and I have signed on to legislation that would do exactly that. Congress must assert its Constitutional authority and rein in an administration clearly out of control.