The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

After NATO Talks, Rogozin Urges End to Libya Airstrikes

March 29, 2011

BRUSSELS — Russia's envoy to NATO urged the alliance on Tuesday not to bomb Libyan ground targets when it assumes command of the military campaign from the U.S.-led international coalition.

NATO should restrict itself only to enforcing the arms embargo and the no-fly zone, Ambassador Dmitry Rogozin said.

"NATO should not go beyond those two principles," Rogozin said.

Jets from an international force have been striking Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi's forces from the air since the UN Security Council adopted a resolution authorizing all necessary measures to protect civilians. Critics say the strikes have turned the international force into the aerial arm of the Libyan rebels.

There was growing criticism from Russia, which abstained from voting for the Security Council resolution, that the international air campaign is overstepping its bounds.

"Without diplomatic measures, there will be no resolution to the Libyan crisis," Rogozin told reporters after a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council. The body, which meets each month, groups the alliance's 28 states and Russia to discuss security issues and to coordinate responses.

On Sunday, NATO decided to assume full command of the international air campaign. The alliance is expected to complete the handover from the international force this week.

Earlier, NATO had taken over the maritime mission off the Libyan coast to enforce the arms embargo. Its jets began enforcing the no-fly zone over Libya on Sunday.

But alliance warplanes have not yet conducted any airstrikes against Gadhafi's forces.

NATO officials have declined comment on details of the alliance's rules of engagement, but a diplomat who asked not to be named in line with standard rules said the rules of engagement would be very similar to those employed by the international alliance — which allowed the extensive bombing of Libya.

Rogozin also urged NATO to keep Russia informed about the military planning for the Libyan operation.

"Libya [will be] a litmus test of the sincerity of our NATO colleagues in their commitment to our strategic partnership," Rogozin said.

Relations between NATO and Moscow hit a post-Cold War low after the Russian-Georgian war. But they have improved significantly since President Barack Obama announced a "reset" of U.S.-Russian ties in 2009, and particularly since the NATO-Russia summit in Lisbon last November.

Today, the two sides cooperate closely in the war in Afghanistan, where Russia provides a vital overland supply link for NATO forces. The alliance and Moscow also work closely on counter-piracy and antiterrorist operations, and the two sides are considering setting up a joint anti-missile shield.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/03/29/after-nato-talks-rogozin-urges-end-to-libya-airstrikes-a5944