TO THE SHORES OF TRIPOLI

Folks, here I am in the mountains of the Bangladesh-Burma border with Christian tribal people, and I just got word that the permits I've been trying to secure to visit Libya have been approved.

This is serious short notice, for the permits allow me to bring a small group of TTPers to Libya for one week next month: Saturday, October 20 to Saturday, October 28.

The place is going gangbusters economically, as oil production is now exceeding pre-revolution 2009 levels of 1.6 million barrels a day. Politically, things are still in flux, as many sectors of society are trying to cooperate in thwarting Islamist efforts to hijack the Libyan Spring.

It's going to be fascinating to watch this playing out first-hand - and in safety. We'll be well taken care of.

We'll see what's happening in both Tripoli and Benghazi; visit Berber villages up in the Nafusa Mountains, the best-preserved Roman ruins on the planet, and the center of the unique form of moderate Libyan Islam; investigate business opportunities, and see what direction post-Gaddafi Libya is heading.

The hotels are nice, the food is good, the people are friendly, and we are going to have an extraordinary time. The schedule and details are below. Appended at the end is *A Note on the History of Libya* - consider it your initial Libya briefing.

Time is short. Please let Miko know immediately if you can join us.

Saturday, Oct.20. Depart US for overnight flight to Rome. (Note there are other ways to reach Tripoli; this is one suggested.)

Sunday, Oct. 21. Arrive Rome in time for connection to Alitalia flight to Tripoli. Arrive 1:00pm, transfer to the El-Khan Hotel in the heart of the Old Medina. We'll spend the afternoon wandering around the old walled city and souks, and seeing such sights as the Arch of Marcus Aurelius. We'll have dinner with a number of Tripoli business leaders.

Monday, Oct. 22. Today we venture south into the Nafusa Mountains to the Berber village of Gharyan. This is the site of the Battle of Gharyan, a key victory of the anti-Gadaffi forces. The Berbers are the original inhabitants of North Africa, called by the ancient Egyptians *Libu* - hence the name Libya as Land of the Libu. Gharyan is known for its troglodyte homes dug deep into the earth:

After the day in Gharyan and the Nafusa Mountains, we return to Tripoli, where business dinners can be arranged.

Tuesday, Oct. 23. This morning we drive to the World Heritage Site of Leptis Magna, the best preserved Roman city there is (better than any in Italy). It's right on the Mediterranean, and we'll explore it all thoroughly. We then return to Tripoli by late afternoon to see more of the capital city at our leisure.

Wednesday, Oct. 24. We leave the Phoenician-Roman western half of Libya (what the Romans called Tripolitania), for the Grecian-Byzantine eastern half (what the Greeks called Cyrenaica) this morning, flying to Libya's second capital of Benghazi.

This is where the revolution against Gaddafi began, and where it was conducted. After lunch, we'll get an in-depth briefing tour of the city from a revolutionary standpoint, and visit the Museum of the Crimes of the Dictator. We stay at the Tebisty Hotel (also spelled Tibesti), where we'll have an opportunity to meet the city's businessmen.

Thursday, Oct. 25. This morning we drive along the coast to Ptolemais, the ancient port of the Ptolemaic Greeks, then up into the Akhdar mountains to the World Heritage Site of Cyrene. The

Temple of Apollo is larger than the Parthenon. We'll explore the entire ancient city from the amphitheatre to Apollo's sacred sanctuary.

A short drive away is the fascinating town of Al Bayda, where we'll spend the night at the just-built Marhaba Hotel. This is where Mohammed al-Senussi (see the history note) built his first school or *zawiya*, becoming the center of Senussi Islam and capital of the Senussi Royal Family.

A critically important question for the future of Libya is the extent to which moderate pro-West Senussi Islam is being revived and can compete with the radical Islamism. It is in Al Bayda that we hope to find the answer. There is also a small Christian community in Al Bayda which we'll visit. Al Bayda is a major business and banking center for eastern Libya, so there will be opportunities to meet businessmen here.

Al Bayda means "the white" as it snows heavily here in the winter. The weather in mid-October will be delightful.

Friday, Oct.26. We spend the morning in Al Bayda, and after lunch we drive to the Mediterranean coast and the resort town of Susa. Nearby, right on the water, are the remarkably preserved ruins of the ancient Greek town of Apollonia. At the end of the day, we drive back to Benghazi for the evening flight to Tripoli.

Saturday, Oct. 27. After a morning visit to the souks or meetings with new Libyan friends, we're off to the airport for the afternoon Alitalia flight to Rome. This enables everyone to easily reach a European destination such as Rome to overnight, then catch a Sunday morning flight back to the US and home by the afternoon of Sunday, Oct. 28.

Cost: $5,850 per person.

Cost includes: All accommodation and meals, all ground transportation, English-speaking guides, all entrance fees, Tripoli-Benghazi round trip air, porter tips for bags, tourist visa.

Cost does not include: International airfare, drinks and personal charges such as laundry. Supplement charge for single room: $950. Business Visa cost if Foreign Ministry does not approve Tourist Visa: $350.

Important Note: *This is an adventure. The situation in Libya can be volatile. Every effort will be made to adhere to the schedule above, but it may be changed at any time.*

Deposits, Payments, Cancellations and Refunds

Due to the immediacy of this opportunity to visit Libya, payment in full must be received by September 20, 2012.

Note that the maximum number of participants is 8. We encourage you to send your payment ASAP to make sure you are one of them.

Refund of deposit and balance in full on the condition of a fully-paid acceptable replacement for you. *Note: You may want to consider* trip cancellation insurance.

Please send all payments or inquiries to:

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A Note on the History of Libya
(Adapted from Islam in Libya, To The Point, March 2011)

Libya is an old place, originally inhabited by Berber nomad tribes the ancient Egyptians called *Libu*. The ancient Greeks colonized the littoral of eastern Libya, starting with a colony named Cyrene in 631 BC, with the whole region subsequently ruled as Cyrenaica under the Ptolemaic Greeks thanks to Alexander the Great who conquered Egypt in 332 BC.

Around the same time during the 7th century BC in western Libya, Phoenician colonists founded the colony of Oea, which the Cyrenaican Greeks took over and called Tripolis (three cities, incorporating two other towns). The Phoenicians of Carthage grabbed it, the Romans wiped out Carthage (146 BC), and called western Libya their province of Tripolitania.

The Ptolemaic Greeks ceded Cyrenaica to Rome in 74 BC, and both provinces under Roman rule became immensely rich. By the early 300s AD, they had become firmly Christian. Yet they remained different, with Tripolitania retaining its Punic or Carthaginian heritage, and Cyrenaica its Greek.

Thus in 395, Tripolitania became part of the Western Roman Empire of Rome, while Cyrenaica was joined to the Eastern Roman Empire of Byzantium (Constantinople). As the rule of Rome disintegrated in the following century, all of Libya was absorbed into the Byzantine Empire.

Then in 647, a horde of 40,000 Arab horsemen swarmed into Libya and subjected its Berber Christian population to their new religion of Islam. A series of Arab and Berber warlords ruled it for centuries until the Ottoman Turks showed up as slave-raiding pirates in the early 1500s.

The most famous of them was a Turk named Hizir whom the Italians (bearing the brunt of his slave raids) called *Barbarossa* (Redbeard, 1478-1546). It was after him, and his Berber cutthroats, that Libya became known in Europe as the Barbary Coast.

For 300 years, the Moslem Barbary Pirates so devastated the Christian Mediterranean that entire coastlines of Spain and Italy were depopulated, there were slave raids as far away as Ireland, and over one million Christians captured and enslaved, who "would end their days as slaves in North Africa, dying of starvation, disease, or maltreatment," in the words of British historian Robert Davis.

Thomas Jefferson put an end to it. The Pasha of Tripoli, Yussif Karamanli, was holding the captain and crew of a US Navy ship hostage for ransom. President Jefferson sent the Marines, who captured Tripoli's city of Derna on April 27, 1805. They were led by Marine Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon, who became the first man ever to raise the American flag in victory on foreign soil.

The Pasha surrendered, the crew was released, and O'Bannon was presented with a Mameluke sword for his bravery, which Marine officers carry to this day. Ever since, the Marines have sung about "the shores of Tripoli."

These events had a profound effect on a teen-age boy named Mohammed bin Ali as-Senussi (1787-1859). From a small coastal town in what is now Algeria and claiming descent from Mohammed through his daughter Fatima, he began preaching a different kind of Islam that appealed to the Berber nomads of North African oases.

Senussi Islam was an eclectic selection of beliefs and practices taken from disparate varieties of Islam - from Salafi austerity to Sufi mysticism. Wherever he went, from Morocco to Cairo to Mecca, people listened to him and the orthodox clerics issued *fatwas* against him because of his subversive insistence on *ijtihad*.

We learned about *ijtihad* - independent reasoning - in Opening The Doors of Islam. But that was a while ago, December 2006, so you might reacquaint yourself with the concept that can save Islam by re-reading it now.

In 1843, As-Senussi founded a monastery or *zawia* at Al Bayda on the coast of Cyrenaica near the ruins of Ancient Greek Cyrene (*al-bayda* means "the white" or "city of snow," as it snows there a lot in the winter). From there, his sermons on *ijtihad* and its opposite, *taqlid*, spread across Libya.

Taqlid is Arabic for "imitation." As-Senussi derided it as "blind following" of ceremonies and tradition like a camel on a leash - for the word comes from *al-iqlid*, the camel's nosering through which it is leashed. Instead of observing prayer rituals and obeying the edicts of *imams* or *sharia* laws out of imitation or *taqlid*, he taught, Moslems must have the freedom to practice their faith according to their own best educated and well-reasoned judgment.

Such teachings are of course revolutionary, a direct attack on Islamic elites pretending to speak for God in maintaining the status quo. And it is just what the Moslem world needs now.

As his followers spread, As-Senussi exercised virtual sovereign rule over most of Cyrenaica (as the Ottomans were absentee landlords), which was expanded and solidified by his son Mohammed al-Mahdi as-Senussi (1845-1902). Then al-Mahdi died and the Italians showed up.

At the end of the 19th century, European powers were carving up Africa, the Ottoman Empire was dying, and Italy wanted in on the colonial game. Britain had Egypt, France had Algeria and Tunisia, and Italy wanted what was in between - the Ottoman provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

The Italians thought it would be a walk, but it took 100,000 of them in 1912 to subdue the region, along with the almost total destruction of Tripoli. Then they had to withdraw two years later as World War I broke out.

After the war, the Brits designated al-Mahdi's son (and as-Senussi's grandson) *Sidi Idris as-Senussi* (1889-1983) as Emir of Cyrenaica, and allowed Italy to maintain Tripolitania and Cyrenaica as Protectorates. The came Mussolini in 1922 with his fascist brutality.

Sidi Idris designated an accomplished guerrilla fighter against the Italians, Omar Muktar, to lead a Senussi revolt against Mussolini. It took Mussolini nine years and wholesale slaughter of Senussites in the tens of thousands to defeat Muktar, who was captured and hung in 1931. Sidi Idris fled to exile in Egypt.

During World War II, Idris led his Senussites against Italy, fighting along with the British. He reclaimed the Emirate of Cyrenaica in 1943, and in 1949 was proclaimed by a council of tribal elders the Emir of Tripolitania.

In 1951, a National Congress adopted a constitution and elected a parliament, which in turn elected Idris as King of Libya. For the first time in history, the ancient land of Libya was unified and independent.

While Libya prospered under King Idris due to the discovery of oil and the benign rule of a tolerant Senussi Islam, Idris infuriated Nasser in Egypt by refusing to join his Arab Nationalist campaign against the West. Idris, a staunch Anti-Communist who despised the Soviets, even signed alliances with the Brits and the US, and had the US Air Force and Strategic Command establish a major military base, Wheelus Air Base.

By the mid-1960s, Idris was approaching 80 and his health was failing. Nasser and the KGB sent agents into Libya to find recruits for staging a coup. They found one in a rabidly anti-Semitic admirer of Nasser who hated Idris for being pro-West. He was a 27 year-old charismatic junior

officer in the Libyan Army named Muammar Gaddafi.

It was my dear friend Ray Cline, former Deputy Director of the CIA, who years ago told me about Gaddafi's sponsorship by the KGB. Ray passed away in 1996, and I sure wish he were here now.

The KGB planned the coup well, taking place on September 1, 1969 while Idris was in Turkey for a medical procedure. The worldwide Soviet media hailed it as a "bloodless coup," with Moscow and every Soviet-aligned state instantly recognizing Gaddafi's Revolutionary Council as Libya's legitimate government.

Gaddafi quickly moved to nationalize the oil industry, set up a secret police, establish a totally ruthless Islamic dictatorship, and use his oil millions to sponsor every Marxist and Moslem terrorist group on the planet. The rest is evil history for 42 years.

With any luck, that evil will soon come to an end. My sources in NATO tell me there is no way what is going on is the "disaster" the enemedia are claiming and hoping for. "This is a very effective mission so far," I'm told, "a very well done functioning operation coordinated between several countries."

My source was talking about the military side of it - but cautioned me that the political side of NATO was another matter, especially with the French demanding they be in charge while they have no real staff officers within the NATO command structure.

My source has nothing but admiration for the Brits, who are showing the world that "The West is getting its balls back." He confirmed the report that MI6 is calling up Libyan generals to advise them to "Defect or die," asking:

"General, we've got the GPS co-ordinates of your command post. They are programmed into a Storm Shadow missile. What do you want to do?"

This is *great*, folks... this is *cool*. *At last* we're going after one of the world's worst bad guys. Every other murderous monster running some awful tyranny is starting to sweat. We should be *celebrating* this. Our angst should be directed at Zero's proven capacity to wimp out and screw it up.

Further, we should be celebrating the attack on Gaddafi's Libya as an *opportunity* to transform a Moslem country from radical to tolerant Islam. Gaddafi has done everything he can to abolish Senussi Islam and impose Sharia - including amputation of thieves' hands and feet, and public lashing of men and women for "fornication."

Yet Senussi Islam and its tradition of *ijtihad* is deep, it's still there. Libyans are not rebelling against Gaddafi because they want *more* Sharia laws imposed on them, to have imams and

mullahs controlling their lives instead of Gaddafi. They are Moslems and they want freedom. Senussi Islam encouraging them to think for themselves is the solution.

Libya before Gaddafi was our friend and ally. It could be again - or not as things could go sideways. But we simply have to get over this paralyzing fear that if we don't support monsters and dictators, Moslem Brotherhood/ Al Qaeda terrorist crazies are going to take over for sure.

Gaddafi will soon be history. Zero will have been an accidental and reluctant cause - and good for him in any regard. Gaddafi's Libya will be forced to submit to civilized behavior, and a Libyan Islam of reasoned thought instead of mindless imitation may emerge in its place. That's what's possible and we should strive for it.

Jack Wheeler, March 2011