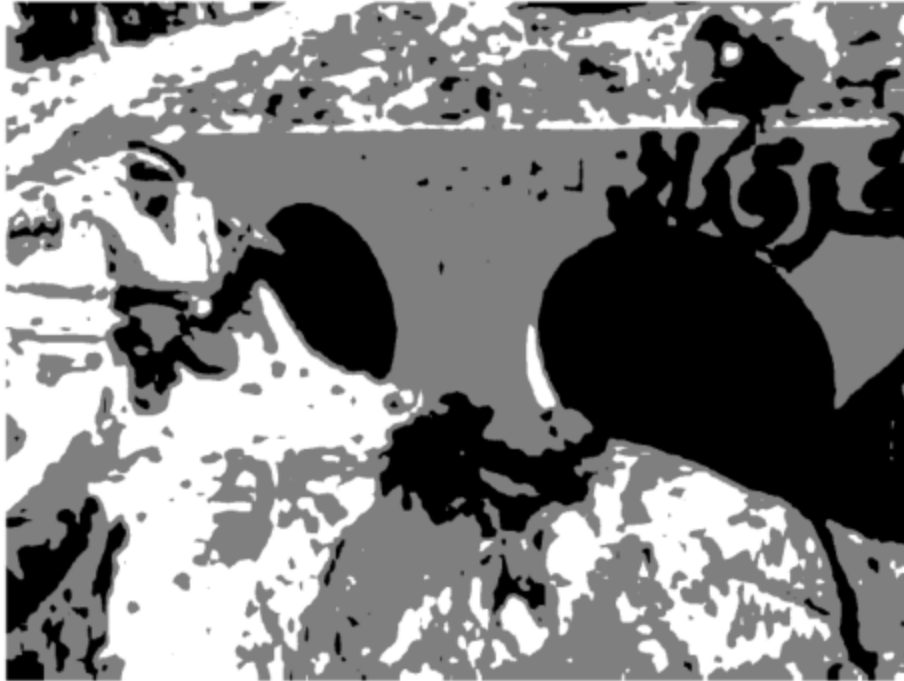


Don't shoot": Qaddafi's last moments

October 20, 2011



A Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) fighter looks through a large concrete pipe where ousted Libyan leader Moamer Qaddafi was allegedly captured, with a dead loyalist gunman in the foreground, in the coastal Libyan city of Sirte on October 20, 2011. Arabic graffiti in blue reads: 'This is the place of Qaddafi, the rat. God is the greatest.' (Credit: Getty Images) Muammar Qaddafi's final day most likely began as it ended: In a squeeze. He was almost surely in the 700-square-yard area of Sirte where Libya's ex-rebels had penned in the die-hard forces remaining loyal to him.

The transitional government had for some time speculated that Qaddafi was out wandering the desert, recruiting fighters for a counter-insurgency. Therefore, at around 8 a.m., the ex-rebels where probably unaware that their ultimate target was actually within their grasp as they began an assault on that small final area. It was around that time that Qaddafi got in a convoy to flee, according to most accounts.

Somewhere just outside of the loyalist-held area, NATO aircraft struck Qaddafi's convoy, but didn't kill him. According to NATO officials, they were unaware Qaddafi was inside. That airstrike, however, hastened his demise.

The Telegraph's Ben Farmer visited the scene where Qaddafi's convoy was hit and the ex-dictator's final moments played out. He writes: "Colonel Qaddafi was finally cornered in a drain underneath a road in open countryside to the west of the city of Sirte. Rebels said a column of vehicles tried to punch out of an encirclement at dawn. They parked up around 3-4kms west of the town, which was hit by a NATO airstrike. Qaddafi and several bodyguards were then forced to take refuge in the drain where they were then captured and taken away by revolutionary forces."

Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) fighters carry a young man holding what they claim to be the gold-plated gun of ousted Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi at the site where the latter was allegedly captured in the coastal Libyan city of Sirte on October 20, 2011.

(Credit: Getty Images) An ex-rebel fighter named Mohammed, "a young fighter in his 20s wearing a blue t-shirt and a New York Yankees baseball cap," told the BBC he found Qaddafi hiding in the tiny drain pipe. The colonel allegedly looked up and said simply: "Don't shoot."

They didn't listen.

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There are conflicting reports about how and at whose hands exactly Qaddafi died. It seems pretty certain he was alive when first captured. Al Jazeera aired video (below) of what is almost surely Qaddafi's final moments. The once-mighty ex-dictator is seen soaked in blood, apparently disoriented, either being led around by or restrained by ex-rebels, who brandish guns as they yell at him and tug his hair, and he appears to yell back. Still other video taken later of his body being dragged around show him covered in blood everywhere, seeming to be bleeding from the head and other places. Reuters reports Qaddafi died around noon and that an ex-rebel official said Qaddafi died after capture in a firefight between his supporters and his captors.

Ex-rebel Adel Samir told the Telegraph that Qaddafi was gunned down with a 9mm pistol, shot in the stomach. Imad Moustaf, another ex-rebel fighter, told Global Post Qaddafi had been shot in the head and the heart. Still other reports claim he was shot in the legs.

Sometime after Qaddafi was shot, freelance photojournalist Holly Pickett tweeted that she saw his body. Pickett says she was embedded with an ex-rebel ambulance, and spotted another ambulance packed with rebels speeding away from Sirte with Qaddafi's body.

"From the side door, I could see a bare chest with bullet wound and a bloody hand. He was wearing gold-colored pants," Pickett tweeted. "At every checkpoint between #Sirte and #Misrata, crowds had gathered and wanted to know if we were the ambulance with #Gaddafi's body in it. Upon hearing the truth, that #Gaddafi was truly dead, revolutionaries at the checkpoints were beside themselves, shouting with joy."

However his final moments may have actually unfolded, the numerous images of his body have already made the rounds on cell phones, computers and TV screens all over the globe, leaving little doubt that Libya's 42 years of Qaddafi's oft-cruel "Jamahiriya" rule is over.

Also captured and killed Thursday was Qaddafi's flamboyant fifth son - also his National Security Adviser - Mutassim Qaddafi, whom Libyans had claimed a week earlier was already captured. An ex-rebel spokesman said Mutassim was killed "resisting his captors," Reuters reports. Additionally, the BBC reports that ex-rebels captured his famed former security chief, Mansour Daw, who, it had been reported, fled to Niger.
