

Libya illusions

By [David Heim](#)

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Neo-cons at the *Weekly Standard* like Bill Kristol, Republican leaders like Mitch McConnell and John McCain, and liberal interventionists such as John Kerry and Joe Lieberman are [calling for](#)

the U.S. to impose a no-fly zone on Libya to help rebel forces remove the despotic ruler Muammar Gadaffi.

The interventionists are shrugging at the cautionary words of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who [warns](#) that establishing a no-fly zone is an act of war that "begins with an attack on Libya to destroy the air defenses." McCain assures us: Libya's "air assets are not large."

Establishing a no-fly zone would inevitably commit the U.S. to further military actions in Libya. Either that, or it would leave the U.S. having promised the rebels more than it can deliver-and thus end up botching the effort to align the U.S. with the anti-Gadaffi uprising.

The interventionists seem to have learned nothing from the failed interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are still on the lookout for an easy victory in the Middle East. Gadaffi is a murderer and a terrorist, and his willingness to kill his own people is obscene. But this is not a problem that can be solved by the U.S. military. Some oldline conservative voices, such as the [National Review](#) and the [Cato Institute](#), offer some of the most cogent arguments for nonintervention.

On the other hand, a no-fly zone that was coordinated with Europe and had the support of Arab leaders would be a different kind of engagement and might be worth trying. Apparently, that's [not out of the question](#).