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Selected Options and Costs for a No-Fly Zone Over Libya

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US policymakers and other world leaders have watched intently as civil war has erupted in Libya. In recent days, reports of air strikes on Libyan rebels and civilians have led some in the international community to call for a no-fly zone. Some argue that since US vital interests are not at stake, America should not become engaged in yet another military operation while the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq remain unresolved. There are also those who argue that given the United States' declining fiscal position, those African and European states whose interests are directly involved in Libya should step-up and implement a no-fly zone. The Pentagon has weighed in, urging caution, and noting that the costs and difficulties of no-fly zones are generally higher than perceived.

What are some possible options and how much would each cost? This analysis examines three options:

- first, an extensive "Full No-Fly Zone" covering all of Libya;
- second, a "Limited No-Fly Zone" focusing on the northern third of Libya, above the 29th parallel;
- and third, a "Stand-Off No-Fly Zone" protecting coastal areas using air and naval vessels operating beyond Libyan territory. Using data from previous no-fly zone operations, this analysis projects the likely costs of each option.