DEFENCE

Libya strike details revealed
TRIPOLI

The extent of the damage
caused by US Air Force and
US Navy aircraft to the five
Libyan targets began to be re-
vealed by the US Department
of Defence late last week.

Flight understands that two
Lockheed SR-71 Blackbirds
left their base at RAF Mild-
enhall at 05.00 and 06.30 on
April 15, a few hours after the
attack, to take reconnaissance
photographs of the target
areas.

As reported in last week's
Flight, the US Air Force
(Europe) was alerted on April
11 to prepare for a strike.
Under the guise of preparing
for a routine Nato exercise,
"Salty Nation", 16 Mc-
Donnell Douglas KC-10
Extenders arrived at RAF
Mildenhall, another eight at
RAF Fairford, and a further
eight KC-lOs arrived over the
weekend. MildenhalFs usual
complement of 14 Boeing KC-
135 Stratotankers swelled to
20, including an extra KC-
135Q, used to refuel SR-71s.

At 21.30 GMT on Monday,
April 14, 15 General Dynam-
ics F-lllFs of the 48th Tacti-
cal Fighter Wing took off
from RAF Lakenheath. At the
same time three EF-111
Ravens of the 42nd Electronic
Combat Squadron left RAF
Upper Heyford to provide
electronic countermeasures
support.
Refuelling twice from the
tankers en route, they flew
over the Atlantic, down the
west side of Spain and
Portugal, and through the
Straits of Gibraltar. Before
letting down to a low level to
penetrate Libya's defences,
the strike force tanked for a
third time. The route covered
about 2,800 n.m., some
1,200 n.m. longer than the
direct, overland route. France,
Spain, and Italy refused the
USA permission to fly over
their countries.

At 01.00 on April 15 the
F-lllFs began a three-
pronged attack on targets in
and around Tripoli. These
were the Al Azziziyah
barracks in Tripoli, the
military side of Tripoli
Airport, and the Sidi Bilal
port facility ten miles west of
Tripoli. The United States
Department of Defence says

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