

Tweets tip off NATO on potential Libya air raids

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Twitter and Facebook are among a wide range of media and other sources NATO's intelligence officers monitor around-the-clock to identify potential targets in the air war against Kadhafi's troops, the officials said.

"We will take [information](#) from every source we can," said British Wing Commander Mike Bracken, the Libya operation's military spokesman.

"We get information from open sources on the Internet, we get Twitter."

A NATO official said Libyans have been tweeting from the rebel-held city of Misrata, Ajdabiya and Tripoli, providing information ranging from movements of troops and tank columns to shellings of towns and fleeing refugees.

"Twitter is a great source," the official said on condition of anonymity.

The official stressed that any information gleaned from the website is checked against other more reliable sources such as [satellite imagery](#) and other traditional intelligence gathering before any jets are deployed.

"On their own they don't represent a reliable source but they do help to draw attention to emerging issues or threats that can be checked out with more sophisticated means," the official added.

The United Nations mandate that authorised that [NATO](#) mission in Libya forbids the presence of ground [troops](#), forcing the alliance to rely on other sources of information.

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