



المعهد المصري للدراسات  
EGYPTIAN INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES

Political  
Assessments  
1 NOV 2017

# Who is behind Derna airstrike?

Haitham Ghneim



[WWW.EIPSS-EG.ORG](http://WWW.EIPSS-EG.ORG)

f Eipss.EG t Eis\_EG

TURKEY- ISTANBUL

Bahçelievler, Yenibosna Mh 29 Ekim Cad. No: 7 A2 Blok 3. Plaza D: 64  
Tel/Fax: +90 212 227 2262 E-Mail: [info@eis-eg.org](mailto:info@eis-eg.org)



## Who is behind Derna airstrike?

Haitham Ghneim

### Introduction

On Monday (Oct. 30), Libya's besieged city of Derna witnessed a horrific massacre that killed and injured dozens of civilians, mostly women and children, after an "unknown" airstrike on the eastern part of the city. While officials in the city said that an Egyptian warplane carried out the bombing, however, Libya's UN-backed Presidential Council said that the bombing was carried out by an unknown warplane, and called on the UN Security Council to intervene and investigate the bombardment. To explore the identity of the warplane that committed the massacre, there are three hypotheses:

### First hypothesis: [Egyptian warplanes carried out the airstrike]

The first hypothesis is that the bombing was carried out by a warplane belonging to the Egyptian regime.

### Evidence:

- 1- The statements released by Egyptian officials, following the Al-Wahat clash, said that the attack was carried out by militants coming across the Egyptian-Libyan border. This means that the Egyptian regime was preparing for a retaliatory strike, as it happened after similar accusations in the past, where the Egyptian aircraft carried out airstrikes against the city of Derna after an attack on a bus carrying Christians in Upper Egypt.
- 2- The strike came on the same day that the Egyptian military spokesman announced in an official statement that the air force had foiled an infiltration attempt by six cars, of the 4-wheel-drive type, loaded with quantities of weapons, ammunition and smuggled materials inside the country through the western border line, and the cars were destroyed completely. This indicates that there were air flights on this border area in coincidence with the airstrike on Derna.
- 3- The Egyptian Air Force carried out previous air strikes against the city of Derna, and the Egyptian Institute for Political and Strategic Studies documented this in a previous report in June 2017. The Egyptian planes, of the Rafale type, bombed the area of Fiteih east of the city of Derna, targeted highly-populated civilian areas, and caused material

damage to houses, cars and farms owned citizens, according to Mohamed Mansouri, the spokesman of the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna at the time.

4- The official statement of Derna's top security chief Brigadier Yahya Al-Usta Omar said that the Egyptian aircraft bombed the city for the fifth time, stressing that the raids targeted two families who were gathering in a popular occasion.

But according to eyewitnesses, the raid was carried out by one warplane and not several aircraft, which is contrary to the previous Egyptian attacks, where a squadron of aircraft used to take off and attack targets together, not just one plane, which brings us to the second hypothesis.

### **Second hypothesis: [Haftar's warplanes carried out the airstrike]**

The second hypothesis is that the strike was carried out by military aircraft belonging to General Khalifa Haftar's militias, as this is not the first time that Haftar's warplanes carried out raids on the city, according to a statement by Mansour al-Hasadi, member of Libya's High Council of State. It is noteworthy that Derna was bombed before by the forces of the retired Major General Khalifa Haftar, which strengthens the hypothesis that the aircraft that carried out the raid was belonging to the his forces, especially that Haftar's forces used to launch their air attacks by a single fighter.

### **Third hypothesis: [American forces carried out the airstrike]**

The third hypothesis is that the air strike was carried out by a military aircraft belonging to the U.S. forces within the framework of pursuing those accused of carrying out attacks on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, and as part of the U.S. policy of physical liquidation of cadres and families of militants belonging to the jihadist groups. It is noteworthy that the U.S. strikes in Syria often led to killing civilians (as what happened in March 2017.) However, the U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement, this week, about the arrest of Mustafa Al-Imam from Libya by US special forces jointly with a Libyan force, for involvement in the attack on the US diplomatic complex in the city of Benghazi in 2012 – strengthens this hypothesis.

### **Conclusion**

The previous presentation may be pointing to the likelihood of the involvement of Haftar's forces in this attack, but this does not mean the absence of the Egyptian role

in this operation, in light of the considerations mentioned above; and also in light of its coincidence with the attacks in Egypt's Al-Wahat area, which suggests that Haftar may have been the tool that carried out the airstrike with Egyptian planning, coordination, and guidance.

