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## Egypt and Development of the Military Situation in Libya

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After the militias of Khalifa Haftar, the leader of the self-styled “Libyan National Army”, had fully controlled the territory of the eastern region, Haftar declared on 4 April 2019 the launch of the “Operation Flood of Dignity” against Tripoli, the Libyan capital, allegedly to “liberate” it from what he called “terrorists and extremists”.

After launching his military operation to enter and control Tripoli, Haftar visited Cairo and met with General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on 14 April 2019 to discuss the developments of the situation in Libya. A statement from Sisi’s office “confirmed Egypt’s support for efforts to combat terrorism and extremist groups and militias to achieve security and stability for Libyan citizens throughout the country, allow the establishment of a stable and sovereign civil state, and start reconstruction and development of Libya in all fields to meet the aspirations of the Libyan people”. However, the statement did not mention Haftar’s offensive directly.

### Egypt and UAE support Haftar

Several media reports have revealed that Khalifa Haftar’s latest moves came with the support of Egypt, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, especially after Haftar’s last visit to Riyadh a few days before the attack, and the UAE weapons captured with the forces of Khalifa Haftar during the clashes.

On 2 May 2019, Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) pledged “to respond to Arab countries that support Libyan National Army commander, in reference to Khalifa Haftar, in his operation to control Tripoli,” announcing that it requested new assistance

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from Turkey. "The government rejects any ceasefire before the withdrawal of the criminal forces from Tripoli to the places where they came from," said GNA Spokesman Muhannad Younis at a press conference held after a cabinet meeting to discuss the situation in Tripoli. "There is no longer any role for Haftar in any future political solution," he said. Muhannad Younis pointed out that the government of national accord "will have a clear response to the countries supporting Khalifa Haftar, "who seeks to build a dictatorship," Younis said, adding, "We have taken control of several positions of the attacking forces and found munitions manufactured in a well-known Arab country, but we will announce them in due course," in clear reference to the military support given by Egypt's Sisi to Haftar in the ongoing fighting in the western region of Libya. In the same context, some reports released pictures of the Egyptian arms and ammunitions, produced by Shubra Factory for Engineering Industries, that were provided by the Egyptian side to the forces of Khalifa Haftar. Muhannad Younis also said, "There are old agreements with Turkey, these agreements have been activated and we also asked them for new things that will come from Turkey and from all the countries that support the Government of National Accord."

In a related context, military sources revealed that Cairo has recently agreed to provide military assistance to Haftar in his battle against the internationally recognized Government of National Accord in the Libyan capital of Tripoli. According to the sources, this includes night vision equipment and jamming systems, in addition to deploying jamming vessels near the coast of Tripoli to try to impede the air force of the Government of National Accord from carrying out air attacks against Haftar forces, which had already caused heavy losses.

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## Military cooperation between Egypt and Haftar's militias

Since Khalifa Haftar launched his Operation Dignity in mid-2014, in Libya, it has become clear that there is strong military cooperation and rapprochement between Egypt and Haftar's forces, and that Egypt has provided various kinds of support to them, including training, supply of weapons, involvement of the Egyptian forces in military operations on the ground, and air strikes – along with UAE forces – in the east, west and south of Libya.

In March, a United Nations report revealed that Egypt and the United Arab Emirates transferred arms to Haftar's militias in Libya. The report also accused the troops led by Khalifa Haftar of complicating the political transition and increasing security problems in the country. The lengthy report dealt with arms smuggling into Libya, which included not only the transfer of ammunition and weapons, but also the transfer of Egyptian fighter planes. Regarding violations of the UN arms embargo, the report said that the UAE illegally transferred weapons and military equipment to the eastern city of Tobruk in late 2014. The report also confirmed the introduction of aircraft owned by Egypt in the Libyan Air Force, although its features were deliberately hidden. The report also pointed out that Egypt provided military support for Haftar's Operation Dignity, and the dissolved House of Representatives in Tobruk.

According to informed military sources from both the Egyptian and Libyan sides, the Egyptian army since May 2014, and up to this time, has been transferring Egyptian and UAE military equipment, including heavy and light weapons and equipment to the forces of Khalifa Haftar. The sources said the military equipment were sometimes transferred by air and sometimes by land from the Egyptian Western Military Zone,

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adjacent to the Libyan-Egyptian border; and that the Egyptian Western Military Zone commanders who were responsible for securing and facilitating the transfer of military equipment to the Libyan territory, included:

- 1- Maj. General Staff Mohamed al-Masri, former commander of the Western Zone and current head of the armed forces operations department.
- 2- Maj. General Staff Wahid Ezzat, former commander of the Western Zone.
- 3- Maj. General Staff Sherif Bishara, former commander of the Western Zone and head of the current Nasser Military Academy.
- 4- Maj. General Staff Salah Saraya, current commander of the Western Zone.
- 5- Maj. General Staff Mohamed Said Al-Assar, former head of the armed forces armament department and current Minister of Military Production.
- 6- Maj. General Staff Abdel Mohsen Mousa, former head of the armed forces armament department.
- 7- Maj. General Staff Tarek Saad Zaghloul, the current head of the armed forces armament department.

### Egypt's role in current clashes around Tripoli

Regarding the current Egyptian intervention in the current battles around the capital, Tripoli, the Egyptian Air Force conducts reconnaissance and monitoring of targets through Egyptian warplanes. However, sources also reported that during the past few

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days, Egyptian warplanes launched air strikes on some targets in the vicinity of Tripoli airport, along with UAE warplanes.

The recent visit of Khalifa Haftar to Cairo for meeting al-Sisi reportedly focused on the air attacks carried out by the Egyptian warplanes on some targets in the capital Tripoli, in addition to targeting specific sites in Tripoli along with the UAE warplanes located in the Egyptian military bases. Also, Sisi and Haftar discussed coordination on the appropriate ground armament that Haftar forces need in the current battles, and how weapons would be transferred to the Libyan interior.

The Egyptian regime has not yet decided to intervene and take part in the ground battles within Haftar's offensive on the Libyan capital, but as some analysts have argued, prolonging clashes may push the Egyptian regime to intervene to resolve the situation in favor of Haftar exactly as they did in the Libyan eastern region after three years of fighting. It is noteworthy that the Egyptian regime adopts the same policy in the ongoing clashes in western Libya: first, providing air support and later participation with troops on the ground. However, according to the functional role played by the Egyptian army, the Egyptian regime is waiting for an international and regional decision that would allow the army to participate in the battles on the ground.

It should also be noted that the Egyptian hospitals treat injured fighters of the Khalifa Haftar forces, according to official sources of the Egyptian government, where on 16 April 2019, two injured Libyan fighters arrived at the Cairo International Airport for treatment in a hospital in Heliopolis. Egyptian official sources also announced on 28 April 2019 that four wounded Libyans entered a Cairo hospital for treatment after suffering injuries and fractures as a result of being shot during the clashes in Libya.

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## Sisi at the Mohammed Naguib Military Base

In another context, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on 16 April 2019 visited the Mohamed Naguib Military Base. Accompanied by army officials, Sisi inspected the combat efficiency and preparedness of forces there and ability to carry out various tasks.

Some believed that Sisi's visit to the Mohamed Naguib Military Base was a message of support to Khalifa Haftar, whose forces received training at that base, especially that Sisi's visit to the Mohamed Naguib military base near the Egyptian-Libyan border came only two days after Khalifa Haftar's visit to Cairo. However, there is another important reason behind Sisi's visit to the military base, according to some observers who believe it was the main motive behind Sisi's visit to inspect combat efficiency and preparedness of forces at that particular time, i.e. that he wanted to send a message that he feels no fear of any action against him by officers or soldiers of the Egyptian army and that the army is entirely under his control. This came in response to a rumor that spread inside the Egyptian army to the effect that the military intelligence had warned him (Sisi) of attending any live-ammunition military exercise or inspection to avoid any life-threatening risks.