

Statement today by the Presidential Council of the Government of National Accord (GNA):

The Presidential Council of the Government of National Accord has closely followed the meeting between President Erdogan and Putin in Istanbul on Wednesday January 8th, 2020.

Whereas the Presidential Council values and welcomes efforts by friendly countries to find a solution to the crisis in Libya, it wishes to reiterate the following:

Our ability to deter and defeat this aggression in defense of citizens, properties, hopes and aspirations the Libyan people in establishing a civilian democratic state.

Our keenness to save lives and protect the national unity, and relying on the political solution to end the crisis.

- We wish to remind that the war which our national army and brave forces have undertaken is a war that was forced upon us by the aggressor and the countries backing him to carry out a coup against the democratic track.
- We welcome any serious call to resume the political track and distance the ghost of war in accordance with the Libyan political agreement and in support of the UN- mediated Berlin conference.

— The Presidential Council to the Government of National Accord Tripoli,

January 8, 2020

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Below is some background info on recent events in Libya, a statement from GNA Advisor for US Affairs Mohammed Ali Abdallah, and comment from President Trump.

### **What happened in Sirte?**

Khalifa Haftar formed a disturbing alliance with Salafist militias and Ghadaffi loyalists in Sirte, enabling him to penetrate the city on Monday night.

Haftar's pursuance of swift, unsteady victory in Sirte – however short lived – is seen as an effort to preempt the losses that are anticipated to result from Turkey's military engagement in support of the GNA, and to distract from the outcry over Haftar's bombing of a training academy in Tripoli over the weekend.

Haftar, whose offensive is materially and militarily supported by countries including the UAE, Jordan and Egypt, and by roughly 1,400 Russian mercenaries, declared "jihad" this week for the second time since his offensive began.

GNA forces from other areas in Libya quickly entered Sirte to reinforce local forces, but after a hours-long battle, the forces announced a temporary withdrawal in order to spare undue bloodshed, with a particular focus on the civilian population caught in the crossfire.

### **What is Sirte?**

The city of Sirte is located in the center of Libya's Mediterranean coast. It was the first ISIS-declared 'caliphate' outside of Iraq and Syria until its liberation by GNA forces with U.S. support in 2016.

### **What does the GNA have to say?**

The following comment is from GNA Advisor for US Affairs, Mohammed Ali Abdallah:

"In their temporary withdrawal from Sirte, the GNA forces made an expressly responsible decision in the face of a needless conflict being waged by a war criminal. Haftar may be willing to slaughter anyone in his path, but the Government has a duty to protect civilians and avoid any unnecessary bloodshed among Libyans. Let it be well understood, however, that the Government will not allow Sirte to be overrun by Haftar and his army of Russian mercenaries. Just as we liberated Sirte from ISIS three years ago, we will again – and we will end Haftar's self-declared "jihad" against our country, returning to a path of peace, stability, and democracy."

### **What happened at the Tripoli training academy?**

On Saturday, Haftar bombed a military training academy, drawing large-scale outrage and condemnation inside and outside of Libya – at least 30 young people were killed. This incident was not only tragic, it dispelled Haftar's self-proclaimed objectives in pursuing Tripoli: to rid the city of terrorists and rogue armed groups. The academy which he bombed provided training for those looking to enter the official Libyan state security sector.

In response, the UN security Council agreed to hold a closed session to discuss Libya.

Libya's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammed Sayala, called on the International Criminal Court to investigate the attack and bring its perpetrators to trial.

The attack was condemned by the U.S. Embassy in Libya. And Jonathan Winer, former U.S. Special Envoy to Libya, condemned the LNA's attack, stating that

"Dropping bombs on young military cadets who are in training, as Haftar and associates have now done, is the kind of thing a terrorist would do, not the act of a legitimate national army."

Links:

@MOFALibyaTIP

The #security\_council agrees to hold a closed session on #Monday tomorrow, to discuss the #Libyan file. Meanwhile, the #Libyan\_foreign\_ministry is calling for taking a strong position against the aggression on the capital, #Tripoli

@MOFALibyaTIP

The #minister of #Libyan foreign affairs is calling the #ICC to take all necessary and emergent procedures to investigate the crime of shelling the military college, and bring its perpetrators for trial before the #international\_judiciary

The U.S. Embassy strongly condemns the military escalation in Tripoli in recent days, including the January 4 attack by LNA-affiliated forces against the Hadaba military college that reportedly killed at least 30 students training to be a professional security force for the Libyan capital. We also condemn attacks in recent days against Tripoli's Matiga Airport and indiscriminate shelling against civilian infrastructure and residential neighborhoods of Tripoli, which killed and injured many civilians.

This deterioration in security underscores the dangers of toxic foreign interference in Libya, such as the arrival of Syrian fighters supported by Turkey as well as the deployment of Russian mercenaries. All Libyan parties have a responsibility to end this dangerous involvement of foreign forces, which is contributing to civilian casualties and damaging civilian infrastructure to the detriment of all Libyans. The U.S. Embassy stands ready to support all Libyan efforts to end the violence, curtail the interference of foreign forces, and reestablish a UN-facilitated political dialogue, which is the only path to lasting peace and prosperity.

<https://ly.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-statement-regarding-military-escalation-in-tripoli/>

@JonathanMaWiner

Dropping bombs on young military cadets who are in training, as Haftar and associates have now done, is the kind of thing a terrorist would do, not the act of a legitimate national army.

### **Trump on Libya:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAsYesijj9M>

Question comes in at 13:41 of the video

Trump: "We are talking to Turkey about Libya. We are discussing with President Erdogan, we are discussing with many other countries. I just spoke with chancellor of Germany, Angela, and we talked about that subject specifically, Libya, what's going on. We'll be talking to Russia, they're involved, a lot of countries are involved with respect to Libya. And it's right now a mess but there are a lot of countries and they all want to know where we stand and they do know where we stand we have a very distinctive stand. And we have meetings set up and we are going to see if we can work out some kind of a plan for peace."

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