

Helping Haftar and Hurting the Legitimate Government of Libya: The EU's Flawed Libya Blockade

Centre for European Reform

[The EU's new Libya mission is flawed](#)

Luigi Scazzieri

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"In its current design Irini is flawed. The operation is supposed to enforce the arms embargo by land, sea and air, cutting off supplies of weapons to the warring parties in Libya to push them towards peace. While Irini will have aerial, satellite, and maritime assets at its disposal, its focus will clearly be on the naval dimension – intercepting vessels suspected of carrying weapons to Libya. **That means Irini will disproportionately affect the GNA**, which is mostly supplied by Turkey by sea (Ankara would struggle to supply the GNA via air). Meanwhile, **the operation will have little impact on Haftar's operations**, as he receives supplies by air and land across the Libya-Egypt border. These will be harder to track, and impossible for Irini to intercept.

The new EU operation risks therefore strengthening Haftar's relative position, and removing any incentive for him to halt the siege of Tripoli and agree to a ceasefire. It also fails to put any pressure on his backers to try to restrain him. This will mean increased humanitarian suffering for the inhabitants of Tripoli, at the same time as the coronavirus pandemic spreads through Libya."

Al Jazeera

[Libya's war: Will new EU mission stop arms shipments?](#)

Ramy Allahoum

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"Analysts say the fact that the EU mission - itself the brainchild of a January peace summit in Berlin - deals primarily with naval violations of the embargo raises questions about its effectiveness.

'There are two entry points to Libya, the western maritime border which Turkey is using to ship in weapons to the Government of National Accord in Tripoli, and the eastern border which Egypt and the United Arab Emirates [UAE] use to support Haftar,' said Anas El Gomati, founder and director of the Sadeq Institute. **'There is no doubt that Egypt and the UAE will emerge as the biggest winners.** The Turks have no option but to ship their weapons by sea, and this is the terrain that is now being policed by the EU.'

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EU Observer

[EU's 'Irimi' Libya mission: Europe's Operation Cassandra](#)

Tarek Megerisi

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“Enforcing the arms embargo and preventing the regional actors driving Libya's war from continuing to do so through arms and mercenary deliveries is a prerequisite to any kind of peace or return to a political process.

In principal, this sounds good. In truth however, the mission statement is about as far as this naval operation gets at resolving this issue as **the vast majority of weapon deliveries to Libya do not come via the sea. They are either flown in at the behest of the United Arab Emirates or driven over the land border with Egypt.**

In fact, the only foreign actor that usually ships arms to Libya is Turkey, and these are to support those defending Libya's capital as part of a security pact with the Libyan government.”

Centre for European Policy Studies

[Operation Irimi in Libya: Part of the solution, or part of the problem?](#)

James Morgan

2 April 2020

“Irimi’s difficult birth is compounded by the operational constraints that it will face. While it is supposed to cover all violations, whether at sea, on land or in the air, the stress is clearly on naval interdiction. As such, it has been denounced by the GNA, as most of their arms shipments come from Turkey by ship, and it is these supplies that would be most susceptible to Irimi control. **On the other hand, Haftar’s forces receive much of their materiel chiefly from, or via, the UAE, Jordan and Egypt by land, and occasionally by air, using borders and airspace that are beyond the control of Irimi.** And it is highly unlikely that Egypt, for example, will agree to do anything other than provide its usual lip service to the embargo, such as cooperating meaningfully with Irimi on the ground.”

European Council on Foreign Relations

[Make-believe in the Med: Europe’s new Libya mission](#)

Tarek Megerisi

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“Without aerial power, the ‘new Operation Sophia’ will simply upset Turkey and **encourage the UAE and Haftar to go for total victory in Tripoli.**”

“The move is a welcome reflection of high representative Josep Borrell’s desire for the EU to embrace action and the new language of power. But it is set to fail. Indeed, this is so clear from the outset that it raises the question of whether the European intent behind the mission is at all

meaningful. The naval mission will disproportionately target one side of the conflict, Turkey, which backs Libya's internationally backed government. It will do next to nothing to prevent ongoing arms flows from the likes of the United Arab Emirates to General Khalifa Haftar, who wants to oust the Libyan government."

"Herein lies the key problem for the EU's new mission. Most of the arms deliveries, particularly those going to Haftar, arrive by air or across Libya's land border with Egypt. This means that the European mission will prove largely ineffective in halting this support. Instead, it will principally target Turkish naval support to the recognized government in Tripoli. Turkey also signed the Berlin communiqué, yet was always skeptical that its regional opponents would adhere to the process. With reason, as it transpired: Haftar subsequently refused to accept a ceasefire and made clear he rejected the Berlin deal outright. As new arms shipments flowed his way, Turkey responded with stepped-up arms deliveries of its own."