

Video: Haftar Forces Stalled South of Tripoli. GNA Fighters Shot Down LNA Warplane

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Global Research, April 17, 2019

[South Front](#) 16 April 2019

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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By April 16, the Libyan National Army (LNA) advance on Tripoli has appeared to be dragged into a trench war on the approach to the southern gate of the city. Militias loyal to the Government of National Accord (GNA) have stopped the LNA advance in the area of Ain Zara and prevented LNA units from cutting off the Tripoli-Misrata highway heading along the coast. These GNA successes predetermined the tactical posture in the area.

Another important success was achieved by the GNA on April 14 when its forces shot down a MiG-21 jet of the LNA Air Force over Ain Zara with a MANPAD. The pilot ejected, but remains missing. The downed MiG-21 jet became a first confirmed and the second claimed downed jet since the start of the LNA advance on Tripoli on April 4. On April 10, the LNA announced that it had downed a L-39 jet of the GNA Air Force. However, there is still no comprehensive evidence to confirm this.

At the same time, multiple counter-attacks by GNA forces have not allowed it to restore control over Tripoli International Airport. The main clashes are taking place south of it, in the town of al-Swani.

The LNA has been continuing to deploy reinforcements, including various military equipment, to the frontline near Tripoli. This move demonstrates that the LNA leadership is set to continue its military efforts in the area.

On April 14, the LNA leader, Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar visited Cairo and met with Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. Following the meeting, the al-Sisi office released a statement

“the president affirmed Egypt’s support in efforts to fight terrorism and extremist militias to achieve security and stability for Libyan citizens throughout the country.”

While the statement did not mention Tripoli directly, Egypt, one of the main LNA backers, de-facto declared its support to the LNA advance.

Additionally, an Egyptian spy plane conducted a reconnaissance flight over the city of Misrata. Misrata’s militias, most of them radicals, are actively supporting pro-GNA forces. An airbase south of the city is hosting most of GNA air force warplanes that carry out strikes on LNA units.

Some sources speculated that the data collected by Egypt may be shared with the LNA in order to increase an efficiency of its operations.

So far, pro-GNA militias have demonstrated that they are capable of resting the LNA advance near Tripoli if they unite their forces. However, if the battle is getting protracted, some pro-GNA groups may find that their participation in the ongoing clashes endanger their business efforts in their core areas of influence. This would create conditions for fragmentation of the pro-GNA force deployed near Tripoli.

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