

Video: Russian Warplanes in Libya

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The US has finally discovered whom to blame for the ongoing escalation of the conflict in Libya.

On May 26, the US African Command (AFRICOM) claimed that Russia had deployed warplanes to Libya to support the Libyan National Army of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar. It said that Russia is expanding its “military footprint in Africa using government-supported mercenary groups like Wagner”.

According to the US military, “If Russia seizes basing on Libya’s coast, the next logical step is they deploy permanent long-range anti-access area denial (A2AD) capabilities.” This, AFRICOM warned, “will create very real security concerns on Europe’s southern flank”. On top of this, it declared, as might be expected, that it is the Russians who are destabilizing the situation in the country; like there was no 2011 NATO invasion that destroyed Libyan statehood and threw the country into a state of permanent chaos.

To make the fearmongering more successful, the Pentagon released shady undated photos of Russian MiG-29, Su-24, Su-34, and Su-35s flying at undisclosed locations and an image of the Al-Jufra air field in Libya with a single MiG-29.

https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR_27_05_2020_ENG.mp4

Earlier in May, sources loyal to the Turkish-backed Government of National Accord reported that the Libyan National Army received 8 fighter jets restored thanks to Russian assistance: six MiG-29s and two Sukhoi 24s. Then, pro-Turkish sources also shared an image of the Al-Jufra air field with a single MiG-29 fighter jet to confirm their claims. Where the rest of the air fleet supposedly supplied by Moscow to Haftar forces might be remains unclear. Another interesting question is where are those hordes of Russian private military contractors that US and Turkish officials like to mention in their reports. While the presence of some Russian PMCs in the country is an open secret, photo and video evidence on the ground demonstrate that the scale of their presence is highly overestimated by mainstream media and Western diplomats. Additionally, Moscow’s actions demonstrate that it prefers to avoid a direct involvement in the conflict.

However, if Turkey and NATO member states continue sending their own military specialists, weapons and military equipment to radical, al-Qaeda-like militant groups operating under the brand of the Government of National Accord, Russia really could consider joining more directly the efforts of the UAE and Egypt, who back the Libyan National Army. Until now, Moscow has been mostly focused on providing a distant diplomatic support to them.

Meanwhile, the number of militants deployed by Turkey from Syria's northwest to Libya to fight on the side of the Government of National Accord reportedly reached 8,000. A large part of them either sympathizes with al-Qaeda ideology or has been directly involved in cooperation with the former official branch of al-Qaeda in Syria, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Over the past years, the Libyan National Army has broken the backs of al-Qaeda-linked groups and cleared them from most of the country. The local branch of ISIS also lost its positions in northern Libya due to its inability to come to an understanding with pro-GNA forces and their foreign backers. But now, the growing terrorist threat is once again becoming an important factor of the conflict.

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