

Video: Turkey Supported GNA Confronts Libya's LNA: Turkish Drones Destroy LNA Pantsir Systems

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Over the past days, forces of the Government of National Accord (GNA) and Syrian militants supported by the Turkish military continued developing momentum against the Libyan National Army (LNA) in northern Libya.

After capturing the Watiya Air Base from the LNA, the Turkish-led forces established control over all the areas surrounding it and deployed to within striking distance of Awlad Badr, an important LNA strong point south of Zawiyah. At the same time, they attacked the town of At Talaiyah aiming to cut off any LNA forces still deployed southwest of Tripoli. The LNA repelled the Turkish-led attack there early on May 21st. Clashes north of the town are still ongoing. Another hot point is Tarhuna. The GNA declared it a zone of military operations and deployed there additional reinforcements, mostly consisting of militants arrived from Syria. Nonetheless, up til now, the new round of the battle for Tarhuna has been limited to artillery duels and airstrikes.

According to pro-Turkish sources, 9 Pantsir-S1 air defense systems, which the LNA had received from the UAE, have been captured by GNA forces or destroyed by drone strikes. 2 systems, one of them almost fully destroyed, were captured at the Watiya Air Base. Turkish Bayraktar TB2 combat drones also struck LNA-operated systems near Sirte, Tarhuna and al-Wishka. Turkish media claim that a total of 15 systems have been lost by the LNA since April 2019.

https://a4s8y4u2.stackpathcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR_21_05_2020_ENG.mp4

The successes of the Tripoli-based government are mostly based on Turkish military efforts. Ankara strengthened the Tripoli defenses with additional air defense systems, electronic warfare systems and Bayraktar TB2 drones at the airbase there. All of these are in fact operated by Turkish military personnel. Turkish warships off the coast of Tripoli also provide additional cover to specialists operating in the area. Meanwhile, Turkish special forces and thousands of Turkish-funded militants in Syria support GNA forces on key chunks of the frontline with the Libyan National Army.

In their turn, the main supporters of the GNA, Egypt and the UAE are not directly involved in the current military standoff. However, if the situation develops further in the current direction, this may soon change.

On May 21, LNA air force chief Saqr al-Jaroushi announced the beginning of the "largest aerial campaign in Libyan history."

"You are about to see the largest aerial campaign in Libyan history in the coming hours," al-

Jaroushi said. "All Turkish positions and interests in all cities are legitimate targets for our air force jets and we call on civilians to stay away from them."

The announcement followed the statement by President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi that his country will not tolerate terrorists or those who support them (as in Syria, a large part of Turkish-led forces in Libya are linked to al-Qaeda or sympathize with the group's ideology). Cairo and Abu Dhabi see the current Turkish expansion in Libya as a direct threat to their national interests. Therefore, they are preparing a response to the actions of Ankara.

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