



[U.S. Military Says Russia Deployed Fighter Jets to Libya to Aid Warlord Haftar's Forces](#)

The U.S. military announced that Russia deployed military aircraft to Libya to aid Russian mercenaries fighting alongside warlord Khalifa Haftar. Officially, Russia maintains no military personnel in Libya. Unofficially however, the Russian paramilitary organization Wagner Group is long suspected of being active in the country. On Tuesday, the United States' Africa Command accused the Russian government of sending fighter jets to Libya to assist the mercenaries fighting alongside Haftar's forces. According to Africa Command, the aircraft left Russia for Syria initially, where they were repainted to conceal their true identity. The jets then continued on to Libya to support Haftar. The Russian Defense Ministry declined comment to news organizations asking for a response to the allegations, and a member of the defense committee in the lower house of Russia's parliament said it was "fake news."

The Wagner Group is comprised of mercenaries with no official ties to the Russian government. However, the organization is known to have close ties to Russian leadership and the United States considers the group to be a fundamental part of Russia's foreign policy. A leaked United Nations report from earlier this month revealed that thousands of Wagner fighters were thought to be involved in Libya, fighting on behalf of Khalifa Haftar.

The Russian government announced on Tuesday that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov contacted Libyan House of Representatives President Aguila Saleh Issa by telephone to tell him that a political solution and ceasefire were needed immediately in Libya. The Libyan House of Representatives is based in the eastern city of Tobruk, and is allied with Khalifa Haftar. Russia has often represented the interests of Khalifa Haftar internationally, and has backed the rebels despite also repeatedly calling for a ceasefire and political solution. Additionally, Moscow has poured roughly \$3 billion into supporting Haftar and his forces.

In recent weeks, Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army has suffered a string of defeats. Most recently, the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord captured the strategically vital al-Watiya airbase, and three military bases on the outskirts of Tripoli. These military defeats undermined the momentum carrying the Libyan National Army, and has increased pressure on Khalifa Haftar to negotiate a political solution to end the conflict. All major players in the Libyan conflict have advocated for a political solution, including Turkey, whose military entrance into the war has had a significant impact.

At the beginning of 2020, Turkey began a one-year military mission in Libya to support the Government of National Accord. Since then, Turkish troops have provided training and support to Libyan fighters on the ground, and Turkish air support has played a key role in recapturing swaths of territory from Haftar's forces. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Khalifa Haftar that pursuing a diplomatic end to the conflict is his only choice, and Turkish forces would directly engage the Libyan National Army if any harm was done to Turkish interests or property in the country.