

France Increases Military Ties With New Libyan Regime

By [Global Research](#)

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Libya and France have agreed to look into boosting maritime security and controlling the North African country's borders, their defense ministers said on Saturday, [Reuters](#) reported.

On a visit to Tripoli, French Defence Minister Gerard Longuet met his Libyan counterpart Osama al-Juwali to discuss the issues and sign a letter of intent to boost cooperation.

Foreign states are worried about the Libyan interim government's capacity to secure its Mediterranean coast, which could be used as a gateway into Europe for arms traffickers, al Qaeda insurgents and illegal migrants.

The Libyan conflict has also created new problems for the fragile region to its south.

Regional governments have warned that instability in Libya after the end of Muammar Gaddafi's rule is allowing weapons taken from Gaddafi's arsenal to fall into the hands of al Qaeda's north African branch and other insurgent groups across the Sahara desert.

"Libya's strategic position joining Africa with the Mediterranean makes it an exposed territory. We have decided to put in a place a working Franco-Libyan committee to look at all these points," Longuet told a joint news conference.

"This will bring together military staff, engineers, technicians and diplomats who will work on these issues. Cooperation between Libya and France is a long-term project."

Two French warships arrived at Tripoli's port last month carrying navy crewmen to train the Libyan navy and help demine oil ports. The ministers said a number of Libyan divers would be trained by France.

Juwali thanked France for the leading role it took in backing last year's rebellion against Muammar Gaddafi's rule.

"The cooperation between France and Libya is developing day by day," he said. "They have expressed their readiness to give us the necessary technical advice to secure our borders."

In December, French army chief of staff Admiral Edouard Guillaud said France was ready to offer military training to Libya and was examining ways to boost its co-operation with the new government.

Longuet also met the chairman of Libya's ruling National Transitional Council, Mustafa Abdel Jalil.

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