

## Video: Turkey Shifts Focus to Southern Libya Amid Stalemate Near Sirte

By [South Front](#)

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*Turkey is looking for opportunities to shift the current balance of power in Libya after its proxies failed to break the Libyan National Army defenses and capture the port city of Sirte in northern Libya in an off-the-cuff advance.*

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu announced on Saturday 25 July that Turkey had signed a military cooperation agreement with Niger during his visit to the African nation, where he held meetings with a number of officials and discussed the effects of the Libyan situation on the region.

Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou also revealed Turkish interest in economic cooperation, especially in the areas of agriculture, mining, transport, construction and energy. As part of Turkey's cooperation with Africa, the Anadolu Agency reported that the Turkish government has donated millions of dollars for infrastructure development on the continent and has sponsored hundreds of African students.

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The deepening military and security cooperation with Niger gives Turkey a potential alternative bridgehead, logistical base and transport hub for its military operations in Libya. The Military Training Cooperation Agreement signed with Niger could also serve as a means to curb France's influence and oppose the French military's efforts in Africa's Sahel region given that country's vocal criticism of Turkey's activities in and around the eastern Mediterranean and its shows of support for Greece and Egypt in recent times.

From the tactical point of view, Ankara seeks to undermine positions of the Libyan National Army and its supporters in southern Libya, near the border with Niger, and to force them to allocate resources to contain the Turkish influence there. This should limit the military capabilities of the allies in the countryside of Sirte.

At the same time, Turkey has continued deploying its own troops and members of Syrian militant groups to the Libyan combat zone. According to reports, just recently at least 5 transport aircraft with personnel and equipment arrived at the al-Watiya Air Base. The Turkish military also reactivated the Hawk medium-range air-defense systems deployed there. The firm position of Egypt, directly supported by the UAE, France and diplomatically by Russia, against a potential attack on Sirte prevented a Turkish military operation there because Ankara did not want to risk launching an open military confrontation with Cairo. Another factor is the reportedly growing presence of Russia-linked private military contractors in the country.

On July 24, the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) shared images claiming to show Russian forces and equipment in different parts of Libya. This included two Russian-made Pantsir-S1 air-defense systems, two Soviet-made Su-24 warplanes and a Russian L-76 military cargo plane in al-Khadim Air Base, and supposed positions of Russia-linked contractors near Sirte.

On July 26, two MiG-29 fighter jets were spotted flying at low-altitude over the coast near Sirte. These warplanes may have been some of the several jets of this type received by the Libyan National Army in May.

However, the Erdogan government has not abandoned its plans and is now looking for opportunities to turn the situation to its own advantage and thus finally capture the strategic port city.

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