

B. Impact on conflict dynamics⁴³

60. The impact of these repeated violations of the arms embargo can be illustrated clearly by the change in conflict dynamics during the reporting period. At the end of 2019, there was a tactical stalemate on the ground, with HAF controlling access routes into Tripoli. Their fixed-wing fighter ground attack aircraft, rotary-wing attack helicopters (Mi24/35) and unmanned combat aerial vehicle (*Wing Loong II*) (S/2019/914, paras. 103–110, and annexes 45 and 47) provided local air superiority over the majority of the country. The Government of National Accord controlled the urban environments of Tripoli and Misratah. GNA-AF had the capability only for local unmanned combat aerial vehicle strikes by their Turkey-supplied *Bayraktar TB-2* unmanned combat aerial vehicles, which were vulnerable to ground attack when located at their operating bases at the Tripoli and Misratah airports. When launched, they were easily destroyed in the air by the *Pantsir S-1* air defence system initially

⁴² Reported in S/2016/209, para.126, S/2017/416, para. 147, S/2018/812, paras.108–109 and S/2019/914, para. 93.

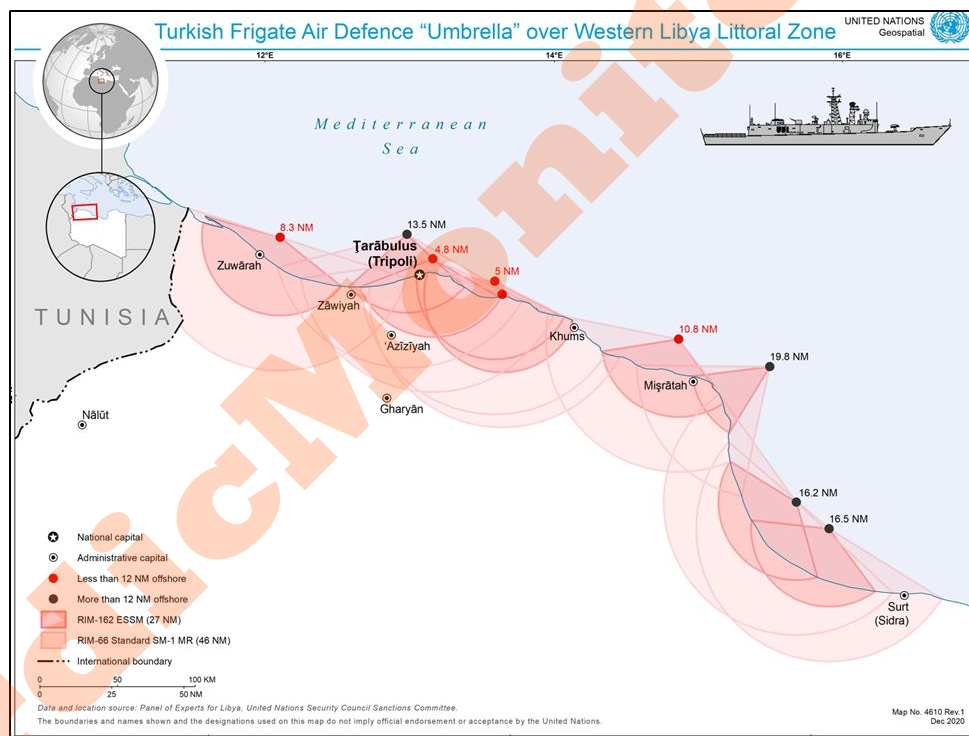
⁴³ Developed from: (a) confidential military sources; (b) UNSMIL reporting; (c) Ioannis Sotirios Ioannou and Zenonas Tziarras, *Turning the Tide in Libya: Rival Administrations in a New Round of Conflict*, Policy Brief, No. 01/2020 (Nicosia, Prio Cyprus Centre, 2020); (d) ongoing Panel analysis; (e) Jason Pack and Wolfgan Pusztai, “Turning the tide: how Turkey won the war for Tripoli”, Middle East Institute, 10 November 2020; and (f) social media commentary.

supplied to HAF by the United Arab Emirates in 2019 (S/2019/914, para. 96, and annexes 28 and 40) and provided in mid-2020 to Russian private military operatives by the Russian Federation (see annex 23). The HAF tactics of trying to draw GNA-AF units out of position into rural areas, thereby making them vulnerable to more decisive attacks, in general failed. By that stage, military success by HAF appeared to be dependent on a local war of attrition.

61. The signing of a security and military cooperation agreement between the Government of National Accord and Turkey⁴⁴ on 27 November 2019 was a strong indicator that Turkey was to increase its military role in Libya. Shortly thereafter, Turkey deployed *Gabya*-class frigates (see annex 24) to provide a medium-range air defence “umbrella” along the western Libyan coastal littoral (see figure I), with MIM-23 Hawk surface-to-air missile systems⁴⁵ providing area defence for the airports in Tripoli and Misratah. Those systems were supported by the use of *Korkut* short-range air defence systems (see annex 26) and man-portable air defence systems to protect important locations.

Figure I

Illustration of Turkish air defence “umbrella” along western Libya coastal littoral (in support of the Government of National Accord Affiliated Forces)



62. The local air superiority of HAF was thus effectively negated early in 2020, allowing for an unchallenged build-up of military materiel through western Libyan ports and airports by Turkey in support of GNA-AF. Turkish military advisers deployed, which gave GNA-AF access to the advice of professional military staff, trained in North Atlantic Treaty Organization tactics and with extensive recent military operational experience. Operational planning was professionalized, with phased

⁴⁴ Abdullah Bozkurt, “Full text of new Turkey, Libya sweeping security, military cooperation deal revealed”, Nordic Monitor. 16 December 2020.

⁴⁵ The Panel reported on MIM-23 Hawks defending Jufrah; see S/2019/914, para. 97. See also annex 25.