

Turkish Parliament Approves Bill Allowing Libya Troop Deployment

By [Reuters](#)

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Khalid Mohammed / AP / TASS

Turkey's parliament on Thursday passed a bill that allows troop deployment to Libya, Parliament Speaker Mustafa Sentop said, paving the way for increased military cooperation despite criticism from opposition lawmakers.

Sentop said the legislation passed with an 325-184 vote in the parliament, where President Tayyip Erdogan's ruling AK Party and its nationalist allies hold a majority. All major opposition parties in the assembly voted against the bill.

Analysts and officials say Ankara is unlikely to immediately send troops, but rather military advisers and equipment.

A senior Turkish official said last week Turkey may train Libyan soldiers in Turkey, and Reuters reported that Ankara is also considering sending allied Syrian fighters to Tripoli as

part of the planned military support.

On Wednesday, Vice President Fuat Oktay said the bill served a symbolic role that Ankara hoped would be a "deterrent" to the parties, and that Turkey may not send troops if Haftar's forces halted their offensive and pulled back.

"The deployment will likely start with military advisers, increased (drones), and special operations that would work with the Libyan military," said Sinan Ulgen, a former Turkish diplomat who is chairman of the think-tank Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies.

"The hope would be that the Turkish military may not itself be involved in military action," he said.

Erdogan's ruling AK Party and its nationalist allies are expected to back the legislation on Thursday despite opposition from the other major parties that say military support would cause Libya's conflict to spread across the region and endanger Turkey's safety.

Ankara signed a military cooperation accord with Tripoli in November and has said it would help prevent Libya sliding into "chaos." It is also meant to protect Turkish private investment in Libya and bolster Turkey's offshore energy claims in the Mediterranean.

But it could also put Turkey at odds with the other foreign players in Libya's war and in the region. The Arab League is the latest to warn against the deployment of foreign fighters in the North African country.

Earlier Erdogan said that Turkey will not stay silent over Russian-backed mercenaries supporting Khalifa Haftar in Libya, as Moscow voiced concerns over possible Turkish military deployment to Libya in support of Haftar's enemies.

"Ankara sees its involvement in Libya as a symbol of its new status as a regional power," said Asli Aydintasbas, senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "The idea is, to be at the big table, you need to be present on the ground."

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Ankara has already sent military supplies to the GNA despite a United Nations arms embargo, according to a U.N. report seen by Reuters.

Better drones from Turkey could help the GNA.

The U.N. said Haftar's Chinese-made drones, which were provided by the UAE and have a broad range, flew 800 air strikes until November, while the GNA's Turkish-made drones carried out 200.

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