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Ressort: Politik

New Italian strategy in Libya

Rome, 06.09.2017 [ENA]

The Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Italy, Marco Minniti met the Libyan General Khalifa Haftar, the chief of the militia who controls a large part of Cyrenaica, the eastern Libyan region. Minniti has experience in the field of intelligence and was Founder and Chair of the Intelligence, Culture and Strategic Analysis Foundation (ICSA), the centre of analysis and cultural development that deals with issues

related to security, defence and intelligence. Sen. Minniti left it in 2013 to take up the post of Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office – an Authority responsible for the security of the Country. Italy's 'Lord of the Spies' Takes On a Migration Crisis, The New York Times wrote on 4th of august 2017 referring to Minniti. The meeting between Minniti and Haftar took place on Monday in Benghazi, at the headquarters of the general commander in al-Rajmeh area. Minniti had arrived in the afternoon from Algeria, where he met the Interior Minister and the Foreign Minister. The meeting is the first between an Italian government man and the general who in Libya is the principal rival of Tripoli's chairman, Fajez al Serraj.

Over the past few months, Minniti has traveled several times to Libya and encountered many government mayors and heads of local communities in addition to Serraj government ministers, but he had never moved to Cyrenaica until today.

In recent months, Haftar had always a hostile attitude towards Italy, accused of sustaining with too much energy the government of Tripoli and particularly the rival forces of Misurata, the city where Italian Ministry of Defence opened a military hospital - Task Force Hippocrates. Italy had positioned the hospital to assist the Misurata fighters who attacked the Isis terrorists in Sirte last summer and then liberated the city.

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The meeting with Haftar certainly has a connection with the new phase in diplomatic relations between Italy and Egypt: frozen for months for the Regeni case which opened a can of worms. Italy has not yet accredited a new ambassador after the withdraw in sign of protest of the ambassador Maurizio Massari and though having named the substitute (Giampaolo Cantini).

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Ambassador Cantini on 14th of September should land in Cairo. Egypt is the main sponsor of Haftar and its Libyan National Army, and Italy is likely to have had the Egyptian support in starting this first encounter with Benghazi General.

Italy's military commitment in Libya "is going ahead and proceeding well", Defence Minister Roberta Pinotti said during a debate at the Festa dell'Unità in Florence on Monday. "We are training the Libyan coastguard in the European mission, then there is another Italian mission involving intervention with respect to Libyan navy vessels that are no longer usable to restore them to use," Pinotti declared, according to ANSA Italian Press Agency.

This second mission is in response to a "specific request" from Libya, she added. "Italy has already reactivated a navy ship and we are reactivating a second: there is an atmosphere of excellent cooperation," the minister said. Meanwhile French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian travelled to Libya on Monday to support implementation of the commitments made by the head of the Libyan unity government Fayez Serraj and the national army commander Khalifa Haftar at a summit near Paris at the end of July to respect the ceasefire and work together to organize elections "as soon as possible".

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