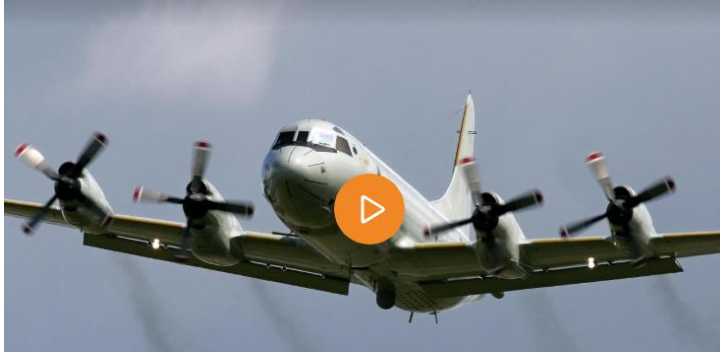


Germany offers P-3C Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft for a Mediterranean mission

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The German government wants to support the new EU mission to monitor the UN arms embargo against Libya from the air. According to WELT information, the P-3C Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft is to be deployed over the Mediterranean.

After a year of absence, the European Union is returning to the Mediterranean by ship. The UN arms embargo on Libya should not only be monitored from the water - but also from the air. Germany makes a concrete offer.

Germany wants to participate with an airplane on the new EU operation "Irinia" in the Mediterranean to monitor the UN arms embargo against Libya. European troops are negotiating the military capabilities they will bring to the mission at a troop conference this Tuesday in Brussels.

According to WELT information, Germany is offering to deploy a P-3C Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft with crew. With the Navy reconnaissance aircraft, equipped with various sensors and a crew of at least eleven soldiers, the German government is meeting the expectations of its EU partners. On the other hand, it also adheres to the announcement by Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU) that she will initially not send any ships.

The minister said in a speech to the German Maritime Academy on March 12 regarding Operation Irini: "I am still hesitant about the possible engagement of our Navy. At least in the first phase, we will not send any ships or boats there." Kramp-Karrenbauer explained that she did not want to detach ships from existing tasks. In addition, "in Libya, the political solution must first be clear before we deploy the Bundeswehr".

This requirement was considered delicate among diplomats because Germany has assumed a political leadership role in the international mediation process since the Libya conference was organized in Berlin in January. At that time, the UN arms embargo, among other things, was

reaffirmed, which has been in force since 2011 but is largely ineffective. To change that, the Libyan borders should now be monitored from the air and from the sea. The foreign policy spokesman for the Union parliamentary group, Jürgen Hardt (CDU), said: For him it was clear "that Germany, as the host of the Libya conference, must also participate substantially in this mission".

The Ministry of Defense did not initially want to confirm the offer to send a maritime patrol. The German contribution also depends on the offers of other countries, it said on WELT's request. As part of a confidential briefing to the Bundestag, the intended posting of the aircraft was confirmed. After that, personnel will also be sent to the mission headquarters in Rome. The cabinet plans to take a decision in mid-April, after which the parliament will vote on the new mission abroad.

The Irini mission replaces Operation Sophia, which expires in late March. The latter has not been used by ships for a year because the EU countries were unable to agree on the distribution of migrants rescued from the distress during the mission. "Sophia" was originally supposed to curb smuggling and human trafficking in the Mediterranean.

Already last Thursday the ambassadors of the 27 EU states had generally on a mandate for the new operation "Irini" agreed . It is intended to monitor the arms embargo not only from the sea, but also from the air and by satellite. The maritime part of the mission had been disputed.