

Estonia contributing to new EU Libya mission

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The government has approved Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) participation in EUNAVFOR MED/IRINI, the European Union's latest military operation which started this week and serves as the continuation of the now-concluded Mediterranean mission SOPHIA.

"Although this is a EU mission, with our contribution, we want to show solidarity with our southern allies, especially Italy and Spain, who are currently facing a very difficult time due to the COVID-19 pandemic and whose participation in the missions is therefore difficult," Minister of Defence, Jüri Luik (Isamaa) said, according to a ministry press release.

Estonia's participation in Operation EUNAVFOR MED/IRINI has primarily arisen from a decision by the Council of the EU on Tuesday to end operation EUNAVFOR MED/SOPHIA, in which EDF troops had been participating.

The size of the mandate for the new mission will not change; as with operation Sophia, up to six personnel may participate in operation IRINI. At present, Estonia is contributing one medical officer.

The primary goal of the operation is to support the enforcement of the UN arms embargo on Libya. In addition, the operation is to support the application of UN measures to prohibit the illegal export of crude oil from Libya, and the training and building up of the Libyan navy and border guard.

The area of operations has, however, changed somewhat, the ministry said; an area of 15 nautical miles surrounding Malta will be excluded, and the new mission will be focused mainly on the east coast of Libya, rather than the vicinity of the west coast.

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