

Russia-Ukraine war, the front expands into the Mediterranean: drones target Russian corvette Merkury

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A powerful explosion and a major fire struck a Russian military vessel moored at the naval base in **Benghazi**, eastern Libya, in what local authorities believe was a drone attack. According to sources cited by *Axios*, the operation was reportedly a long-range strike carried out by Ukraine's Security Service (**SBU**), while conflicting accounts are emerging regarding the circumstances of the attack and the condition of the vessel.

What happened in Benghazi

According to initial reports, the explosion occurred aboard a Russian vessel docked at the port of Benghazi, where it had called as part of the cooperation agreements and naval facilities arrangements between Moscow and the administration in the country's east. According to local authorities, the vessel had been in the area for several days and was heading back to Russia after taking on fuel and supplies.

As for casualties, initial information points to several injured but no fatalities. Regarding the vessel's identity and fate, *Sky News* and specialist outlet *Naval News* report that it was the Russian Navy corvette **Merkury** (*Steregushchiy*-class, Project 20380), which was reportedly "almost certainly destroyed" by the explosion and ensuing fire.

Possible attack methods: aerial drones or explosive drone boats

There is still no official confirmation of the means used, but several theories point to the use of unmanned systems:

- **The SBU lead:** *Axios* and *Channel 12 News* journalist Barak Ravid reported on X, citing a source familiar with the matter, that it was a long-range attack linked to Ukrainian security services.
- **The drone-boat hypothesis:** Sources at the military base cited by *Dpa* say that six Ukrainian drone boats were involved, with four reportedly neutralized, according to a Libyan television broadcaster.
- **Reports of aerial drones:** Several videos and online reports mentioned attempts to intercept an aerial target over the city before the blast.

At present, there has been no official claim of responsibility from Kyiv.

The reaction of the eastern Libyan government

The eastern Libyan government led by **Osama Hammad**, in the area controlled by the forces of General **Khalifa Haftar**, strongly condemned the incident, describing it as a «serious attack on national sovereignty» and a violation of port security and maritime navigation. In its official statement, Benghazi made clear that the episode cannot be dismissed as a mere accident. The eastern authorities ordered a thorough investigation in coordination with **Moscow** to determine the causes of the explosion, trace the origin of the attack, and identify any perpetrators or accomplices, while reserving the right to take legal and diplomatic action. The episode comes amid heightened tension along maritime routes used by vessels linked to Russian logistics and military interests, from the central Mediterranean to the Baltic.

News link: https://www.navalnews.com/