



MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE EU AND OTHER EXTERNAL ACTORS TO THE EU'S SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURHOOD, 2010-25

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Introduction

Strengthening the military capabilities of European Union (EU) partner states, including by providing weapons, has become an important element of the EU's approach to peace and security over the past five years. This shift from an approach centred mainly around crisis management means the EU is entering a space occupied by several other actors, including some EU member states, allied states—notably the United States—and what the EU refers to as its 'strategic competitors'.¹

The shift is a rapid evolution that is occurring against a backdrop of volatility in US foreign policy and intensifying strategic competition in the EU's broader neighbourhood. Together, these trends raise important questions about how the EU compares to other external actors as a provider of military assistance. To address these questions, SIPRI has produced three fact sheets mapping military assistance provided by the EU and other external actors to states in the broader European neighbourhood. The fact sheets will feed into a larger study into the effectiveness of the EU's military assistance to partner states and its coherence with that of EU member states.

'Military assistance' is here defined to include basing and deployment at the request or with the acceptance of host countries; supply of arms and military equipment; advisory support for military organizations; provision of training and education; and bilateral or multilateral exercises. The fact sheets also look into arms sales, as these reflect relations among states and the influence of external actors in a country or region.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the EU's and other external actors' military assistance to the EU's Southern Neighbourhood in 2010–25. It covers the period after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force on 1 December 2009. The treaty considerably expanded the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP, previously the European Security and Defence Policy).²

The EU's Southern Neighbourhood covers 10 North African and Eastern Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.³

KEY FACTS

- The period 2010 to 2025 has been characterized by wide-ranging developments and events that have affected the provision of European Union (EU) military assistance to the EU's Southern Neighbourhood. The Arab uprisings, war in Syria, Libya and Gaza, and war between Iran and Israel, are just some examples.
- In some cases, the EU avoided providing significant military assistance. For example, in Libya, the EU's migration management goals meant its assistance focused on strengthening border services.
- In other cases, the role of the EU and EU member states in supplying military assistance was much more pronounced. Examples include Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, where the EU's focus was on national security, border security and counterterrorism.
- Other actors outside of the EU also provided military assistance to states in the Southern Neighbourhood, including China, Russia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.
- The USA is the most significant supplier of military assistance to the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, having provided most states in the region with arms, training and military education, and deployment and assistance during conflicts.
- Russia has also provided military assistance to states and non-state actors in the Southern Neighbourhood, including in Algeria, Libya and Syria.
- Türkiye's role as a provider of military assistance has grown in recent years, with provision of military assistance to Libya and Syria.

The European Union

Over time, the EU has increasingly incorporated military assistance in its aid to states in the Southern Neighbourhood, motivated by priorities such as regional security, counterterrorism, countering smuggling and trafficking, migration control and regional stability. The European Peace Facility (EPF), established in 2021, has become a key means through which military assistance is provided to other states, including those in the Southern Neighbourhood such as Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. Another means is a 'Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership', a cooperation framework with a partner state for dealing collectively with global challenges that represents a major escalation in bilateral relations.⁴

EU military assistance to Egypt

In 2013, following political violence in Egypt, the EU Foreign Affairs Council announced that EU member states had agreed (a) to suspend licences for export to Egypt of any equipment which might be used for internal repression; and (b) to reassess export licences for military equipment and review their security assistance to Egypt.⁵

In 2024 Egypt and the EU agreed to elevate their partnership to a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership worth €7.4 billion.⁶ The partnership's six priority areas include security, which has two aspects: 'Strengthen cooperation on counterterrorism, preventing and countering security threats, including cyber, and involve Interpol'; and 'Explore further cooperation in law enforcement, fighting organised crime, and providing capacity building and training'.⁷

In November 2024 the Council of the EU adopted an assistance measure under the EPF worth €20 million 'to support the Egyptian Armed Forces' (EAF).⁸ The measure aims to 'strengthen the capacities of the EAF to enhance the national security and stability of Egypt [and] the protection of civilians', including strengthening the EAF's 'territorial control capabilities . . . and its ability to respond to security threats' across Egyptian territory, especially in the western region.⁹ The measure, which will last for 36 months, includes financing a range of non-lethal equipment, including light armoured patrol vehicles, small uncrewed aerial vehicle systems, light and mobile radars, and goggles with night-vision features.¹⁰

EU military assistance to Jordan

Between 2023 and 2025, the Council of the EU adopted three bilateral assistance measures under the EPF worth a combined €55.25 million to support the Jordanian

Armed Forces (JAF).¹¹ The measures focused on the enhancement of Jordan's military medical services, engineer brigades and operational units in charge of Jordan's border security; the provision of detection and countermeasure systems, surveillance and reconnaissance systems, and mobility and engineering equipment; and the provision of short-range radars and a local command and control system, and related supplies and services.¹²

In January 2025, the EU and Jordan raised their cooperation to the level of a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership focused on five 'key areas of common interest'.¹³ The key area of security and defence aims to boost dialogue and cooperation on common security challenges, including 'terrorism and violent extremism, hybrid threats and drug trafficking', and enhanced cooperation with EU agencies; support the JAF, including via the EPF; and jointly fight organized crime, illegal smuggling and cybersecurity threats.¹⁴

EU military assistance to Lebanon

In December 2022 the Council of the EU adopted its first assistance measure under the EPF 'to the benefit of' the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). The measure, valued at €6 million, aimed to enhance the capabilities and resilience of the LAF, with a specific focus on its medical military facilities and operational personnel, by financing healthcare equipment and providing individual equipment, respectively.¹⁵

In September 2024 the Council of the EU adopted a second assistance measure under the EPF for the LAF, worth €15 million over 36 months, also aimed at enhancing the LAF's capacities for military medical operations, and engineering and logistics operations.¹⁶

The third such assistance measure, adopted in January 2025, was worth €60 million, which represented a significant increase in EU military assistance to Lebanon.¹⁷ The assistance measure is aimed at supporting the LAF's ability to 'redeploy, secure and maintain stability in the South of Litani Sector of the country', a plan the EU considers crucial to efforts towards achieving a lasting ceasefire and implementing the 2006 United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an end to the hostilities.¹⁸

EU military assistance to North Africa

In 2015 the European Commission established a funding instrument to 'address the root causes' of irregular migration, among other things, and 'to contribute to better migration management'.¹⁹ The EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of

irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa) comprises programmes in 26 partner states across three regions of Africa, including the EU Southern Neighbourhood states in the North Africa ‘window’: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.²⁰

Between 2018 and 2024, the EUTF for Africa’s Border Management Programme for the Maghreb region (BMP-Maghreb) focused on strengthening the border management capacities of Morocco and Tunisia, where the armed forces are involved in border control alongside other institutions. The BMP-Maghreb had two main aims: (a) ‘to target national border agencies of Maghreb countries or any related institutions that are in the front-line in the management of borders, irregular migration and protection of migrants in vulnerable situations’; and (b) to ‘provide support to strategic development, purchase and maintenance of priority equipment, capacity building and development of necessary standards and procedures at the national level’ in line with international norms and human rights.²¹ The EU’s contribution to the programme via the EUTF for Africa was €65 million.

In 2013 the Council of the EU established the EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM Libya), at the request of Libya, to support Libyan authorities to ‘develop capacity for enhancing the land, sea and air borders’.²² In 2025 the council extended the mandate for EUBAM Libya for an additional two years, with a budget of €52 million allocated for this period. Although EUBAM Libya operates under the EU’s CSDP, it is a civilian mission that does not involve military assistance to Libyan armed forces. However, another CSDP mission to Libya—the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED) Operation Irini, launched on 31 March 2020 and extended to 31 March 2027—is a military mission.²³ Its aim is to implement the UN arms embargo on Libya, with the use of aerial, satellite and maritime assets. Its precursor, EUNAVFOR MED’s Operation Sophia (2015–20), focused on disrupting human smuggling and trafficking networks in the South Mediterranean Sea.²⁴

EU member states

EU member states have provided military assistance to the Southern Neighbourhood, in service to both overall EU goals and individual state policy towards states in the neighbourhood. France, Germany and Italy provide the most extensive military assistance to the neighbourhood, including prominent roles as suppliers of arms to, variously, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia.

France

France has sold major conventional arms to a number of states in the Southern Neighbourhood since 2010, including Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon and Tunisia.²⁵

In addition to arms sales, France’s main military assistance to the Southern Neighbourhood is in the form of joint military exercises, including bilateral military exercises with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco.²⁶

Egypt and France conduct the Cleopatra joint naval exercises on a recurring basis. The latest iteration in 2025 included theoretical and practical lectures aimed at unifying concepts of joint operations, and planning and managing combined maritime activities. The exercise also involved training on countering non-traditional maritime threats, which contributed to skills enhancement and exchange of expertise among participants.²⁷

Jordan and France have participated in military exercises involving other partner nations but also conducted the bilateral Jabal military exercises. The latest iteration in 2025, ‘Jabal 6’—in which the JAF’s Rapid Intervention Rangers Battalion/61 and a French Special Forces team participated—aimed to enhance joint coordination and rapid response capabilities during emergency situations, and to boost participants’ ability to operate effectively in a variety of challenging environments.²⁸

Morocco and France have conducted a range of bilateral military exercises across the land, sea and air domains. For example, the latest iteration of the Chebec naval exercises in 2025 aimed to enhance interoperability between naval forces.²⁹

France has also engaged in bilateral agreements pertaining to security and defence with states in the Southern Neighbourhood. For example, in 2025 France and Morocco signed a joint security action plan which focuses primarily on tracking internationally wanted criminals and dismantling intricate criminal networks, in addition to intelligence sharing, police training, operational coordination and technical support.³⁰ France and Morocco have also established a Joint Military Commission, the 23rd annual session of which was held in 2025.³¹

In April 2025 Egypt and France elevated their bilateral relations to a strategic partnership, showing the depth of their relationship.³²

Germany

Germany has provided military assistance to states in the Southern Neighbourhood through various means, including arms sales, the supply of military equipment and training.

Since 2010 Germany has supplied major conventional arms to states in the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, including Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.³³ For example, Germany is a significant supplier of arms to Israel, with a particular focus on naval capabilities. Germany supplied Israel with submarines in 2014–15 and frigates in 2022–23, some of which it gifted and others it subsidised through discounts.³⁴ Germany continued to supply arms to Israel after the Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2023 and the ensuing war in Gaza.

Since 2016 Germany has pursued a capacity-building initiative, the Enable and Enhance Initiative (E2I), providing €100 million under budget heading 60 for E2I projects decided and administered jointly by the foreign office and the ministry of defence.³⁵ The initiative aims to enable partner states to provide security and stability, including by the provision of training to civilian and military personnel, and of equipment, including arms.³⁶ Jordan and Tunisia were among five countries initially selected for the E2I.³⁷ For example, in 2018 Germany provided Jordan with 70 Mercedes-Benz Zetros off-road trucks, 56 minibuses, a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van and two training planes, all under the E2I.³⁸

Germany also provides assistance to partner nations through other instruments, such as the Equipment Aid Programme for Foreign Armed Forces instrument and the Police Training and Equipment Aid Programme (AAH-P). In Tunisia, Germany has provided assistance through both the E2I and the AAH-P.³⁹ In 2016 Germany and Tunisia signed a security agreement with the aim of reinforcing joint efforts against organized crime, terrorism and illegal migration.⁴⁰

Italy

Italy has provided military assistance to states in the Southern Neighbourhood through various means, including arms transfers and training. Since 2010 Italy has supplied major arms to Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Libya, Lebanon and Tunisia.⁴¹

Italy also provides military assistance through specialized programmes. For example, in 2015 the Italian Bilateral Military Mission in Lebanon was established to carry out security force assistance activities aimed at strengthening the ability of Lebanon's state authorities—including the Lebanese Armed Forces and internal security forces—to uphold its security without international assistance.⁴²

Other external actors

China

China has provided military assistance to states in the EU Southern Neighbourhood through arms sales and strategic partnerships, among other means.

China supplied major arms to five states in the region in 2010–25: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Syria.⁴³ China's military assistance to states in the Southern Neighbourhood is limited compared to that of other states, but is noteworthy where some states in the region seek to have defence relations with China, in part to diversify their relationships.

Algeria has been the largest importer of Chinese arms in the Southern Neighbourhood, accounting for 68 per cent of major arms transfers from China to the region in 2010–25, increasing to 91 per cent in the most recent five-year period (2020–25). Over the entire 2010–25 period, China supplied Algeria with frigates, artillery (including coastal defence systems and multiple rocket launchers), and a range of missiles, sensors, armed drones and armoured vehicles.

Morocco was the second-largest importer of Chinese arms in the Southern Neighbourhood, accounting for 25 per cent of Chinese major arms exports to the region in 2010–25. Those supplies included armoured vehicles, air defence systems, missiles (including missiles for air defence systems), artillery and armed drones.

Egypt was the third-largest recipient of major arms from China in the Southern Neighbourhood in 2010–25. China supplied Egypt with aircraft, including armed and reconnaissance drones and trainer/combat aircraft, and with missiles, including air-to-surface missiles and anti-tank missiles.

China established bilateral comprehensive strategic partnerships with Algeria and with Egypt in 2014, and a strategic partnership with Morocco in 2016.⁴⁴

China and Algeria also participate in joint military training activities and expertise sharing. For example, Algeria has sought Chinese expertise in military manufacturing.⁴⁵

Russia

Russia has provided military assistance to both states and non-state actors in the EU Southern Neighbourhood to bolster its strategic interests, including in Algeria, Libya and Syria.

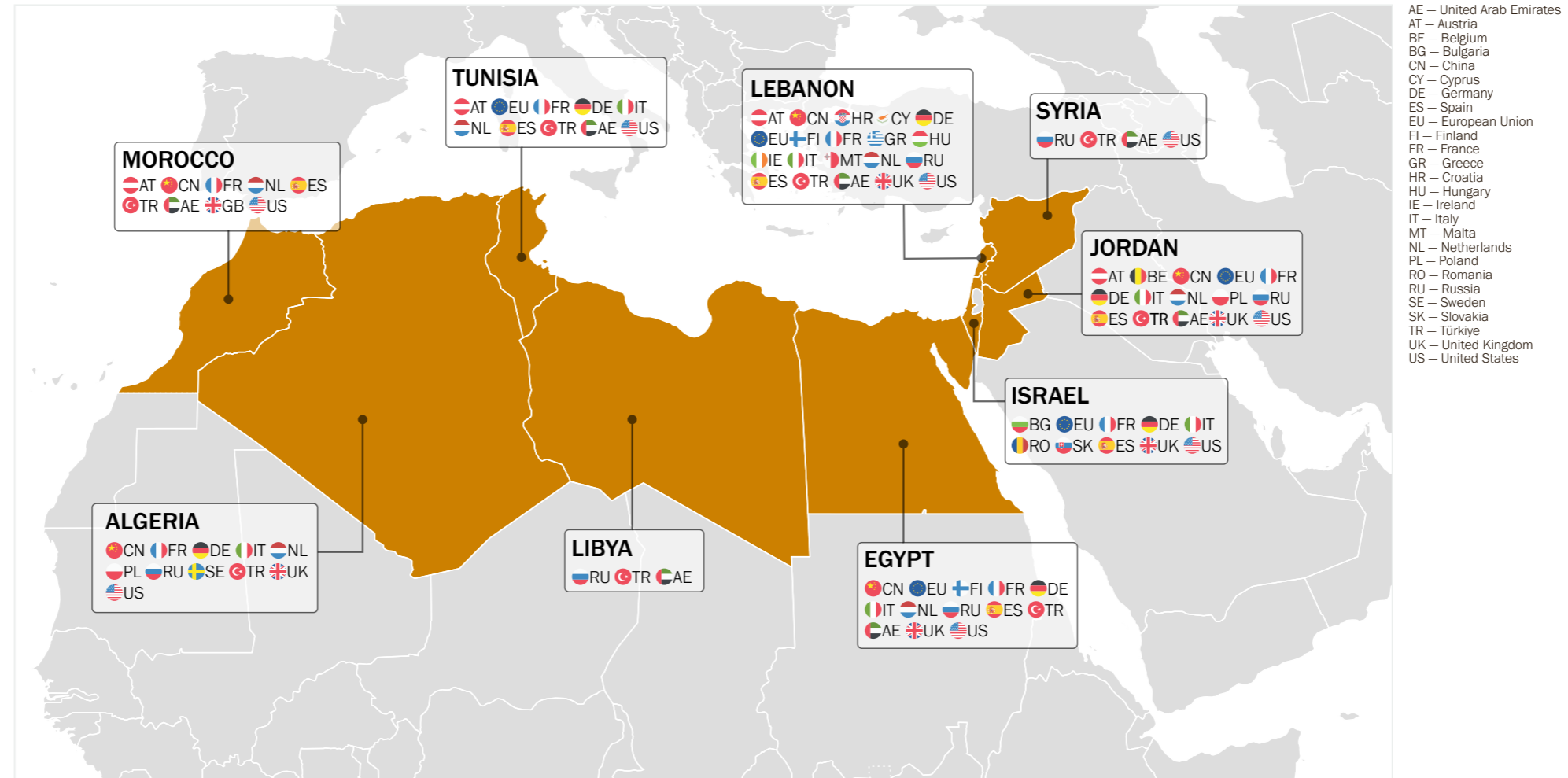
Russia was the largest supplier of major arms to the Southern Neighbourhood in 2010–25, accounting for 31.6 per cent of all arms exports to entities in the Southern Neighbourhood. However, in the last five years,

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KEY FACTS

- ▶ The period 2010 to 2025 has been characterized by wide-ranging developments and events that have affected the provision of European Union (EU) military assistance to the EU's Southern Neighbourhood. The Arab uprisings, war in Syria, Libya and Gaza, and war between Iran and Israel, are just some examples.
- ▶ In some cases, the EU avoided providing significant military assistance. For example, in Libya, the EU's migration management goals meant its assistance focused on strengthening border services.
- ▶ In other cases, the role of the EU and EU member states in supplying military assistance was much more pronounced. Examples include Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, where the EU's focus was on national security, border security and counterterrorism.
- ▶ Other actors outside of the EU also provided military assistance to states in the Southern Neighbourhood, including China, Russia, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.
- ▶ The USA is the most significant supplier of military assistance to the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, having provided most states in the region with arms, training and military education, and deployment and assistance during conflicts.
- ▶ Russia has also provided military assistance to states and non-state actors in the Southern Neighbourhood, including in Algeria, Libya and Syria.
- ▶ Türkiye's role as a provider of military assistance has grown in recent years, with provision of military assistance to Libya and Syria.

RECIPIENTS AND SUPPLIERS OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE



KEY EVENTS

- **2013**
 EU Foreign Affairs Council announcement regarding transfer of military equipment to Egypt. EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) Libya established.
- **2015**
 European Commission establishes the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. EU launches naval operations to disrupt trafficking in South Mediterranean Sea.
- **2020**
 EU launches naval operations to implement the United Nations arms embargo on Libya.
- **2021**
 EU establishes the EPF.
- **2022**
 Council of the EU adopts first assistance measure under the EPF for the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) worth €6 million.
- **2023**
 Council of the EU adopts first assistance measure under the EPF for the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) worth €7 million. USA and Germany continue supplies of arms to Israel after Hamas-led attack and ensuing war in Gaza.
- **2024**
 Council of the EU adopts second assistance measure under the EPF for the JAF worth €13.25 million, and for the LAF worth €15 million. Egypt and the EU elevate their partnership to a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership.
- **2025**
 Council of the EU adopts third assistance measure for the LAF worth €60 million. The EU and Jordan enter a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership. Council of the EU adopts the third assistance measure for the JAF worth €35 million. Mandate for EUBAM Libya extended. Syrian government under Hay'at Tahrir-ul-Sham.

MILITARY ASSISTANCE BY EU ACTORS

The EU and its member states increasingly integrated military assistance into their engagement with the Southern Neighbourhood, driven by priorities such as regional stability, counterterrorism, border security and migration management. The European Peace Facility (EPF) became the EU's main tool for supporting partner armed forces, particularly in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon through funding for surveillance systems, mobility assets, medical support, logistics and border control capabilities. In North Africa, EU assistance also focused on migration and border management through programmes in Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

Some EU member states have also played leading roles through arms transfers, training missions, joint exercises and security partnerships. France expanded naval and counterterrorism cooperation with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco; Germany combined arms exports with capacity-building initiatives; and Italy supported Lebanese security forces through bilateral military missions.

MILITARY ASSISTANCE BY OTHER EXTERNAL ACTORS

CHINA

China expanded defence ties with the Southern Neighbourhood mainly through arms transfers and strategic partnerships. Algeria was the principal recipient, receiving Chinese frigates, artillery, missiles, drones and armoured vehicles, while Morocco and Egypt imported air-defence systems, aircraft and armed drones. Although China's military role remained smaller than Western or Russian involvement, China increasingly positioned itself as an alternative security partner.

RUSSIA

Russia was a major military actor in the Southern Neighbourhood, especially in Algeria, Syria and Libya. It combined extensive arms exports with military deployments, advisers, private contractors and operational support. Russia intervened in Syria from 2015, establishing long-term bases and supporting the Assad government. In Libya, Russia backed Khalifa Haftar with aircraft, missiles, air-defence systems and military assistance operations.

TÜRKIYE

Türkiye significantly expanded its military role in the region during 2010–25, particularly in Syria and Libya. Türkiye supported opposition groups in Syria with weapons, training and coordination structures, while conducting cross-border military operations against ISIS and Kurdish forces. In Libya, Türkiye backed western factions and the Government of National Accord through military cooperation agreements, deployments, arms transfers and operational assistance.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The UAE increased its military engagement in the Southern Neighbourhood through arms transfers, joint exercises and direct operational support. The UAE supplied weapons to several regional states, including Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, while deepening defence cooperation with Egypt through exercises. In Libya, the UAE supported the House of Representatives (HOR) rebel group with weapons systems, air support and assistance.

THE UNITED STATES

The USA was the dominant provider of military assistance, combining arms transfers, military financing, troop deployments, training and joint exercises. Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco received extensive US support through the Foreign Military Financing programme, weapons sales and education programmes. The USA also maintained deployments in Syria and Jordan while supporting regional operations, counterterrorism and interoperability initiatives.

Russia supplied lower volumes to the region, becoming its fifth-largest supplier and accounting for 5.7 per cent of arms transfers.⁴⁶

Algeria

Algeria was the largest recipient of major arms from Russia in the Southern Neighbourhood in 2010–25. Russian military assistance to Algeria, including arms sales, occurs against a context of a strategic partnership between Algeria and Russia. In 2001 Algeria and Russia signed a declaration of strategic cooperation.⁴⁷ It has manifested in the form of prominent arms transfers, military training and joint operations, among other things.

Syria

Prior to Russian military intervention in Syria from 2015, Russia's military assistance to Syria primarily took the form of arms transfers. In 2010–14 Russia accounted for 91 per cent of all major arms transferred to Syria.⁴⁸ In 2015–19 after the beginning of the Russian intervention, Syria continued to rely mostly on Russia for its imports of major arms, but the amount of Russian arms supplied dramatically decreased, by 80 per cent.

Russia's military intervention included deployment of military advisers and special operations forces, and the use of Russian combat aircraft to conduct strikes, as well as the presence of Russian private military contractors, like the Wagner Group.⁴⁹ Russia also established military bases in Syria, such as the Tartus naval base and the Hmeimim air base. In 2017 a new agreement between Syria and Russia for the Tartus naval base provided, among other things, for the deployment of Russian warships and the establishment of a long-term Russian presence at the base.⁵⁰

Libya

Under the Gaddafi administration, Libya and Russia enjoyed strategic relations. Around 2016, Russia began to move towards support for General Khalifa Haftar in eastern Libya. Russia supported Haftar in the Libya war via deployment of Russian aircraft (e.g. in 2020), arms transfers, technical assistance and military advising.⁵¹

SIPRI data shows no Russian arms transfers to the government in western Libya after 2013. However, Russian supplies of arms to the House of Representatives (HOR) rebel group are recorded from 2020. Russia accounted for 62 per cent of all transfers of major arms to the HOR from all suppliers since 2014. Russia has supplied aircraft, armoured vehicles, missiles and air-defence systems to the HOR.

Türkiye

Türkiye's role in the EU Southern Neighbourhood has increased in recent years. The most substantial Turkish military involvement in the region is seen in Libya and Syria.

In 2010–25 Türkiye was the 12th-largest supplier of major arms to the Southern Neighbourhood. In the last five years (2021–25) it became the 8th-largest, accounting for 1.2 per cent of the region's arms imports. This small percentage does not necessarily reflect the importance of Turkish presence in the Southern Neighbourhood, especially in Syria and Libya. In 2021–25 Türkiye supplied major arms to five states in the Southern Neighbourhood—Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia.⁵²

Libya

Following the 2011 uprising in Libya, Türkiye participated in the intervention led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

To counter the potential rise of Khalifa Haftar, following the outbreak of the second Libyan civil war, Türkiye provided military support to factions in western Libya. In 2019 Türkiye developed its relations with the Government of National Accord through two memoranda of understanding (MOUs), including one on security and military cooperation.⁵³

Syria

In 2011–16 Turkish military assistance to Syria was characterized by support for rebel groups, including the Free Syrian Army, through funding and weapons supply. In 2017 Türkiye coordinated with the Syrian Interim Government to create a central military formation, and the creation of the Syrian National Army (SNA) was announced in December 2017.⁵⁴ SIPRI data records transfers of armoured personnel carriers to Syrian rebels in 2017 and 2018.

Türkiye carried out various military operations in Syria during 2010–25. For example, Operation Euphrates Shield (2016) targeted Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Kurdish fighters in Northern Syria.⁵⁵ Operation Olive Branch (2018) resulted in the capture of Afrin from Kurdish forces.⁵⁶ Operation Peace Spring (2019) aimed at creating a 'safe zone' in northeastern Syria free of Kurdish rebels in the region and for the resettlement of some Syrian refugees.⁵⁷ Operation Spring Shield (2020) aimed to prevent extremists and refugees from the Syrian conflict entering into Türkiye.⁵⁸

Following the Syrian government takeover by Hay'at-Tahrir-ul-Sham in 2025, Türkiye began focusing on supporting the current government with military training

and arms transfers, while maintaining an on-the-ground presence in Syria.⁵⁹

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has provided military assistance to states in the Southern Neighbourhood through various means, including arms transfers, training and assistance.

Since 2010, the UAE has supplied major arms to seven states of the Southern Neighbourhood: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.⁶⁰

The UAE and Egypt have conducted joint military exercises. An example is the Zayed 3 joint military exercise which took place in 2021 in the UAE over 10 days, and involved the air forces of both states.⁶¹

The UAE has provided military assistance to the HOR in Libya, including armoured personnel carriers, multiple rocket launchers, self-propelled air defence systems, surface-to-air missiles and towed guns. The UAE has also assisted the HOR on the ground, providing air support between 2019 and 2020 in the form of air strikes.⁶²

The United States

The USA is the most significant provider of military assistance to the EU's Southern Neighbourhood. In 2010–25 the USA provided major conventional arms (through sales and aid) to Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, rebel forces in Syria, and Tunisia.⁶³ It has provided military assistance to states in the Southern Neighbourhood through arms transfers and foreign military financing, training and exercises, and through military bases, deployment and assistance during conflict.

Arms transfers and military financing

Israel and a number of other states in the Southern Neighbourhood have received military assistance in the form of arms transfers and military financing from the USA since 2010. In the discussion below, military aid is not necessarily confined to the date ranges shown by way of example.

Israel. In 2010–25 Israel was the largest recipient of arms from the USA, including arms transfers during times of conflict. It is the leading global recipient of security assistance under the US Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programme, formalized by a 10-year (2019–28) MOU, under which the USA provides \$3.3 billion in military finance and \$500 million for cooperative programmes for missile defence on a yearly basis.⁶⁴ The USA has also provided supplementary emergency military aid to Israel under an MOU signed in 2016. Following the Hamas-led

attacks of October 2023, the supplementary military aid provided to Israel has gone beyond the usual terms of that MOU.⁶⁵ In April 2024 the US Congress passed a law that included, among other things, \$3.5 billion under the FMF for Israel, and a total of \$5.2 billion in defence appropriations for missile defence (\$4 billion) and Israel's Iron Beam laser defence system (\$1.2 billion). Israel also enjoys significant leeway to integrate locally designed subsystems onto aircraft it imports from the USA.⁶⁶ Important transfers since 2010 include combat aircraft, which are key to Israeli operations in Gaza and other states in the Middle East. All of Israel's active combat aircraft originate from the USA.

Egypt. Egypt is one of the largest recipients of military financing from the USA. The US Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2026 provides \$1.5 billion in total aid for Egypt, \$1.375 billion of which is for FMF grant aid—\$75 million more than what Egypt had been receiving as an FMF baseline for decades.⁶⁷ Arms transfers from the USA since 2010 include armoured vehicles, aircraft and ships.⁶⁸

Jordan. Between 2015 and 2025, Jordan was the third-largest global recipient of military financing from the USA, having received \$2.155 billion in FMF grants. In January 2025, the USA had \$4.47 million in active government-to-government sales to Jordan under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system.⁶⁹

Morocco. Between 2012 and the beginning of 2025, the USA provided \$135 million in military financing to Morocco. In January 2025, active sales under the FMS totalled \$8.5 billion.⁷⁰

Lebanon. The USA has invested significantly in the LAF. Between 2006 and 2020, the USA had invested more than \$2 billion in the LAF, rising to \$3 billion by 2025, meaning that one-third of this amount was invested in the last 5 years of this 20-year period.⁷¹

Military education

The USA has provided military assistance through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme to states in the Southern Neighbourhood, including Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco. This includes nearly \$23 million to fund Lebanese military students receiving training in the USA between 2014 and 2025, including 120 members of the LAF in 2019–20.⁷² Under the IMET programme, Moroccan students have been sent on an annual basis to professional military education classes at US service schools.⁷³ By January 2025, over 6000 members of the JAF had received training under IMET.⁷⁴

Joint military exercises and training

The USA participates in military exercises and trainings with different states in the Southern Neighbourhood. These include the Juniper exercises with Israel, Bright Star with Egypt, and Eager Lion with Jordan.⁷⁵

The Juniper exercises are a series of military exercises conducted between the USA and Israel for many years, with a focus on interoperability and cooperation between US and Israeli forces. The Juniper Cobra and Juniper Falcon exercises were initiated in 2001.⁷⁶ The first Juniper Oak exercise in 2023 became the largest joint US–Israeli bilateral military exercise in history, including roughly 6400 US and 1100 Israeli personnel, and involving 100 US fighter, bomber and refuelling aircraft, 42 Israeli aircraft, and the USS George H. W. Bush carrier strike group.⁷⁷

The Bright Star military exercises are a series of biennial military exercises co-hosted by Egypt and the USA that involve the participation of various nations from around the world. The latest iteration occurred in 2025 and involved the participation of 44 states, of which 14 participated with over 8000 troops and the rest as observer states.⁷⁸ The training in the exercise encompassed a wide range of operations, including conventional and irregular warfare, command post exercises, field training, and combined joint task force planning. The chief focus of the exercise involved strengthening collective defence capabilities, reinforcing strategic partnerships and improving regional security.⁷⁹

Hosted by Jordan, the Eager Lion exercises began in 2011 as a bilateral military exercise between the USA and Jordan, and quickly transformed into multilateral exercises in the 2012–16 iterations. Bilateral and multilateral Eager Lion exercises took place in 2016–19. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, Eager Lion became a biennial multilateral exercise, the 11th iteration of which occurred in 2024. The central theme of these exercises is defence against hybrid threats and non-state actors.⁸⁰

Troop deployments

The USA has carried out deployments in states in the Southern Neighbourhood, including in Israel, Jordan and Syria.

Israel. Since 2010 the USA has for the most part focused on bolstering Israel's qualitative military edge through high-tech arms transfers. However, since the Hamas-led attack in October 2023, the ensuing war in Gaza, and attacks in other states in the Middle East, there has been a shift towards more deployment in support of Israel. In October 2024, the USA deployed a THAAD anti-ballistic

missile defence system, along with 100 troops to operate it.⁸¹ Another THAAD was deployed in April 2025.⁸²

Jordan. As at December 2024, the USA had deployed almost 4000 troops in Jordan for military operations against ISIS in Syria and Iraq, and to support Jordanian security.⁸³ The US military presence in Jordan began with a small deployment of US Special Forces in 2012, but increased substantially in 2013 when Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced the deployment of more troops to 'improve readiness and prepare for a number of scenarios' in response to the civil war in Syria.⁸⁴ In 2016 US President Barak Obama announced that 2200 troops were deployed in Jordan at the request of the Jordanian government to 'support the security of Jordan and promote regional stability'.⁸⁵ In 2021 Jordan and the USA signed a defence cooperation agreement under which US forces in Jordan are authorized to carry out military operations from Jordan as the USA considers necessary, and which identified 12 facilities and areas in Jordan for the deployment of US forces and personnel.⁸⁶

Syria. Since 2015, under Operation Inherent Resolve, US forces have operated in Syria to seek 'the enduring defeat of the ISIS'.⁸⁷ By August 2015, the USA had delivered non-lethal assistance to vetted units of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Syrian Free Army (SFA) to help them defend against state violence and against extremist groups like ISIS.⁸⁸ Since 2014 the Syria Train and Equip programme has also supported the SDF and the SFA in the fight against ISIS. Outside the framework of Operation Inherent Resolve, the US Central Command has also carried out air strikes inside Syria since 2015.⁸⁹ While the USA has had extensive military presence in Syria it is currently in a process of withdrawal.⁹⁰

Security sector support

The USA also carries out support for the security sector. For example, the United States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority (USSC) was established in 2025 to fulfil US commitments under the Middle East Roadmap for Peace. Among other things, it has facilitated cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian security establishments and provided training and support to the Palestinian Authority Security Force.⁹¹

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