

## **Libya to ask U.N. to lift arms embargo: state media.**

Writing by Marie-Louise Gumuchian

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(Reuters) - Libya will soon ask the U.N. Security Council to lift an embargo on arms imports to the North African state, the official news agency quoted Prime Minister Ali Zeidan as saying, despite the armed turmoil plaguing the country.

The Security Council imposed the embargo at the start of the 2011 uprising to protect civilians during a conflict that later ousted dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

"I will discuss the question of lifting the embargo when I meet with the head of the U.N. Security Council in the next few days," LANA news agency quoted Zeidan as saying after a meeting with Libya's defense minister and army chief.

No further details were given. Officials at Zeidan's office and the foreign ministry were unavailable for comment.

LANA quoted army chief of staff Yussef al-Mangoush as saying Libya was planning to rebuild its army and wanted to sign contracts with international consultancies to help carry this out and assess what kind of equipment it needed in the future.

More than a year after Gaddafi's capture and killing, Libya remains a volatile country as its new rulers struggle to impose their authority on a vast, desert country awash with weapons left over from the 2011 war.

State security forces remain weak and militias, made up of former rebel fighters, hold the real power on the ground.

In December, the national assembly announced Libya's long and porous borders with Algeria, Niger, Sudan and Chad, would be closed off temporarily, and declared its desert south a military zone in the face of growing unrest.

That decree sought to allay regional fears about Libya's lingering disorder but the lack of a strong army or border force raised questions whether it would have any effect on the ground.

In the chaos since Gaddafi's fall, the south has become a smuggling route for weapons which have reached al Qaeda militants deeper in the Sahara desert. The lawless region is also a conduit for trafficking legal and contraband goods.

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