



1. The Big Picture

LNA's Derna offensive could revive East-West divide

This week, the Libyan National Army's (LNA) offensive in Derna intensified. On 15 May, LNA drone strikes killed seven fighters and injured seven others from the Derna Protection Force (DPF), former Derna Mujahideen Shura Council (DMSC), amid heavy clashes in Derna's Al-Heela area.

Politically, Haftar relies on a victory in Derna to show strength and assert his credibility closely following his absence. A victory in Derna would help restore confidence in Haftar's ability to eliminate a remaining Islamist stronghold in eastern Libya. This would have widespread and nationwide political ramifications. Given Derna has often been used by Haftar's opponents to question his hold over the East, victory achieved with relative speed in Derna could increase support for Haftar throughout the country, including in the West. Haftar would likely seek to exploit a victory in Derna to achieve alternative political outcomes, including reasserting his legitimacy as a candidate in any upcoming elections, which would also likely result in a revival of the East-West divide and tensions.

However, despite the LNA's military superiority, it remains unclear whether victory will be achieved with relative speed. As the offensive escalates, it will become increasingly difficult for Haftar to balance military expansion into the city with the risk of indiscriminate civilian targeting. This remains a probable scenario given the likelihood that DPF militants will retreat from the outskirts and into the city, increasing civilians' exposure. Despite the LNA recently announcing it will provide safe passage for militants who surrender, overall, the conduct of hostilities in Derna could present a significant reputational risk for the LNA, which would undermine Haftar's

broader efforts to gain the international recognition that his Government of National Accord (GNA) counterparts benefit from.

Even if the LNA and other Operation Dignity units claim victory in Derna, there will likely remain tensions in the long-term, including the risk of further disruptions and direct attacks. This was the case for Benghazi, which witnessed a wave of instability in the past four months. Regardless of the outcome in Derna and however likely an LNA victory, there remain internal tensions in the East, which were recently revived during Haftar's absence and effectively worked to dismiss the notion that the East remains a block of cohesive units.

Beyond the East, the Derna offensive stands as a key battlefield for Islamist groups in the entire country. In reality, from Islamists' perspective, a loss in Derna would reduce their prospects to be part of any future political framework in Libya, and could even compel some elements to join the LNA or GNA. Although difficult to ascertain, in Tripoli, this could have a direct impact on the General National Congress (GNC) and Libyan Islamic Fighting Group's (LIFG) supporter base, including in Tajoura. However, the fact that the principal GNC and LIFG backers will likely maintain a presence in the West, makes a Derna loss more symbolic for Islamists than posing any existential threat.

KEY POINTS

- Haftar relies on victory post-absence
- Nationwide political ramifications
- Key battlefield for Islamists in Libya



CONTENTS

- 1 **THE BIG PICTURE**
LNA's Derna offensive could revive East-West divide
- 2 **NATIONWIDE SECURITY**
Events, Analysis and Data
- 3 **SECURITY BY NUMBERS**
Charts, Statistics and Analysis
- 4 **TRIPOLI REPORT**
News & Neighborhoods
- 5 **BENGHAZI REPORT**
News & Neighborhoods
- 6 **WHAT'S NEXT**
Forward Looking Expert Opinions

2. National Security Map

VBIED explosion targets LNA units South of Derna; clashes persist between DPF & LNA

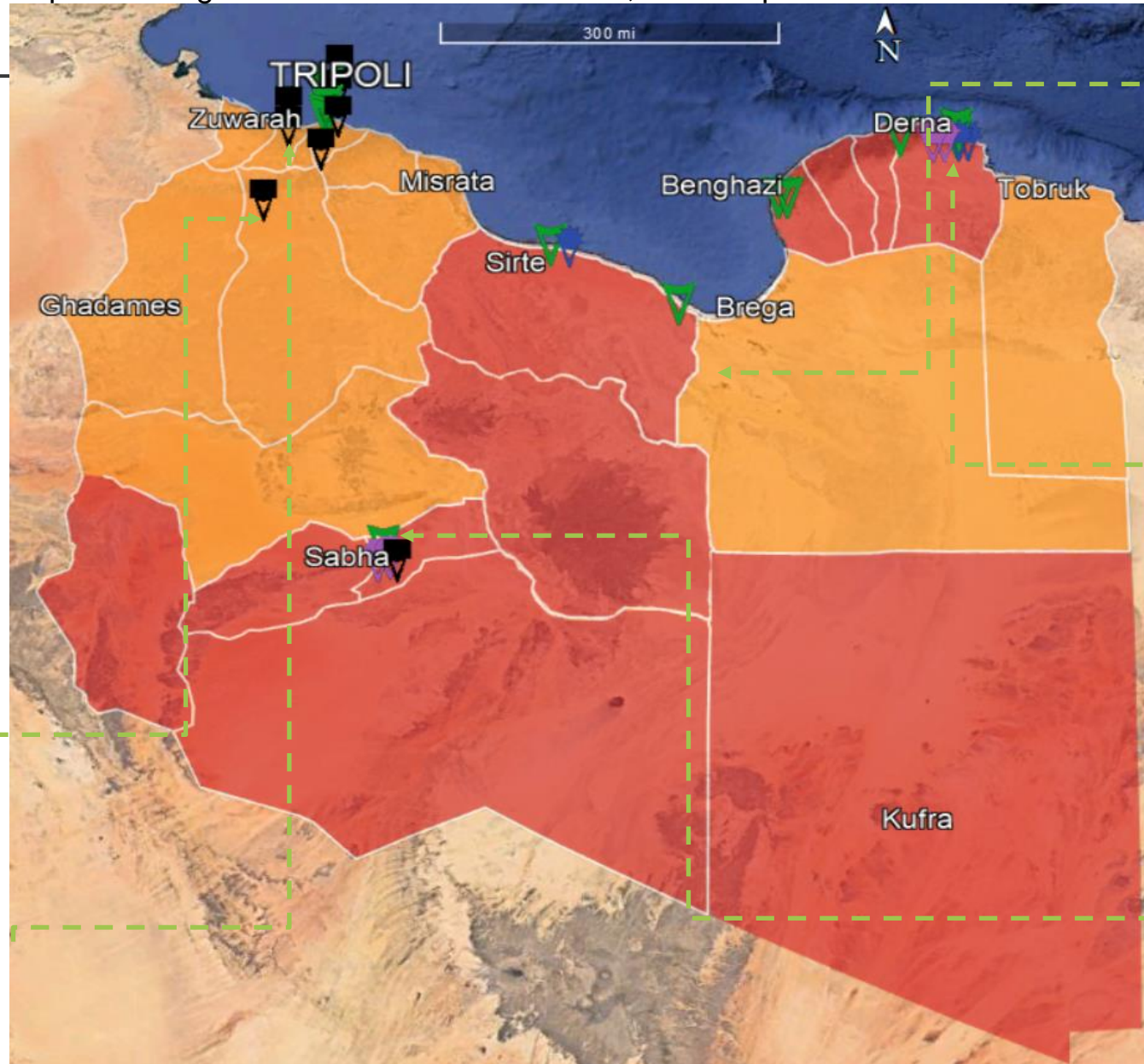
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

-  IED | VBIED
-  Violent Clash
-  Isolated Gunfire
-  Other



On 19 May, reports suggest locals closed a pipeline linking the Maradah fields to oil ports, in protest over unmet financial demands, the overall deterioration of local services.

On 16 May, a Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) explosion targeted LNA units in the Al-Fataeh area, South of Derna, with no further reports of casualties, fatalities, and/or physical damage. On 18 May, reports suggest clashes renewed in the Dhahr al-Hamr area, 30 kms South of Derna, between LNA units and Derna Protection Force (DPF) militants, resulting in the death of at least four DPF members and one LNA soldier, while injuring three other LNA soldiers.

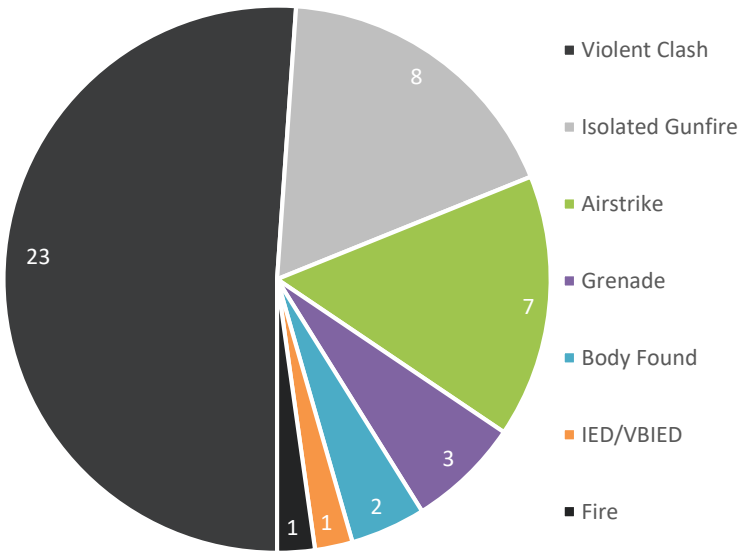
Reports suggest a police officer from Al-Qaradah was found killed inside his vehicle on a road near the Faculty of Literature of the University of Sabha on 17 May. The municipality, according to its media office and eyewitnesses, stated that on 17 May, a Toyota vehicle with three individuals, two of whom were carrying AK-47 rifles and another carrying a PKT vehicle-mounted machine-gun, shot and killed the policeman.

Unidentified gunmen shot and subsequently killed Fathi Aoun, the head of the Western and Southern District "Brigade 200" Force, in an unidentified area of Zintan, before sunset prayers on 17 May.

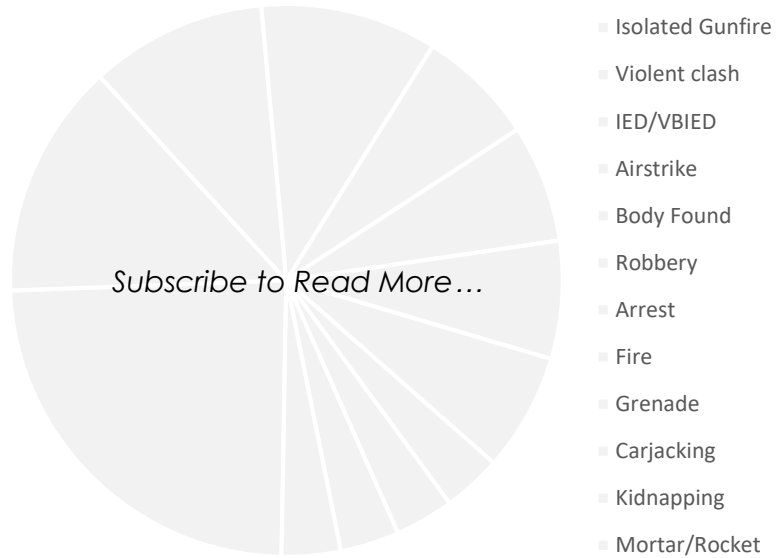
Multiple Zawiyah-based pro-General National Congress (GNC) armed groups and Dabbashi militia vehicles were reported near Sorman and moving towards Sabratha on 20 May. Reports also suggest battalions from Sabratha are in a state of alert.

3. Nationwide Security Analysis Half of recorded nationwide fatalities due to ongoing Derna clashes

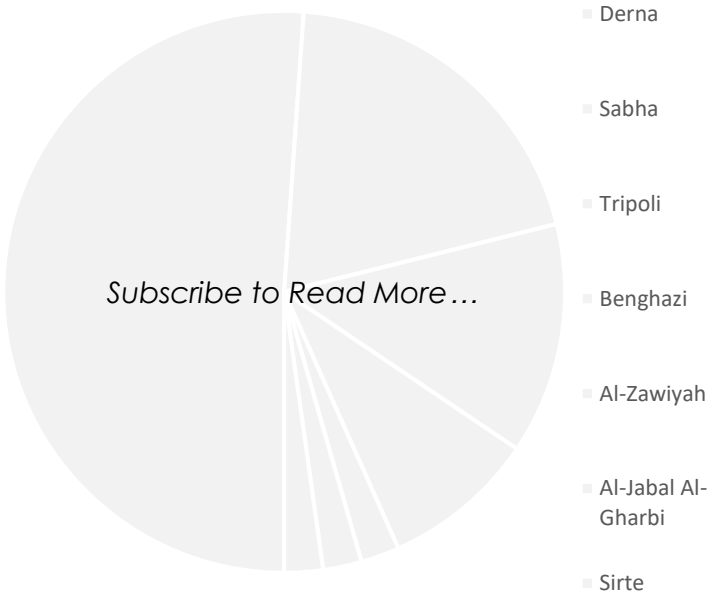
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



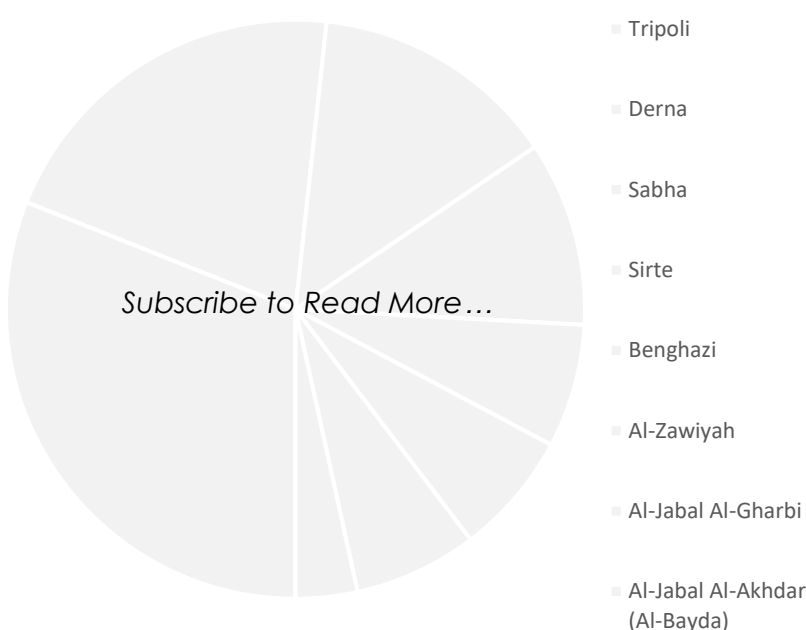
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



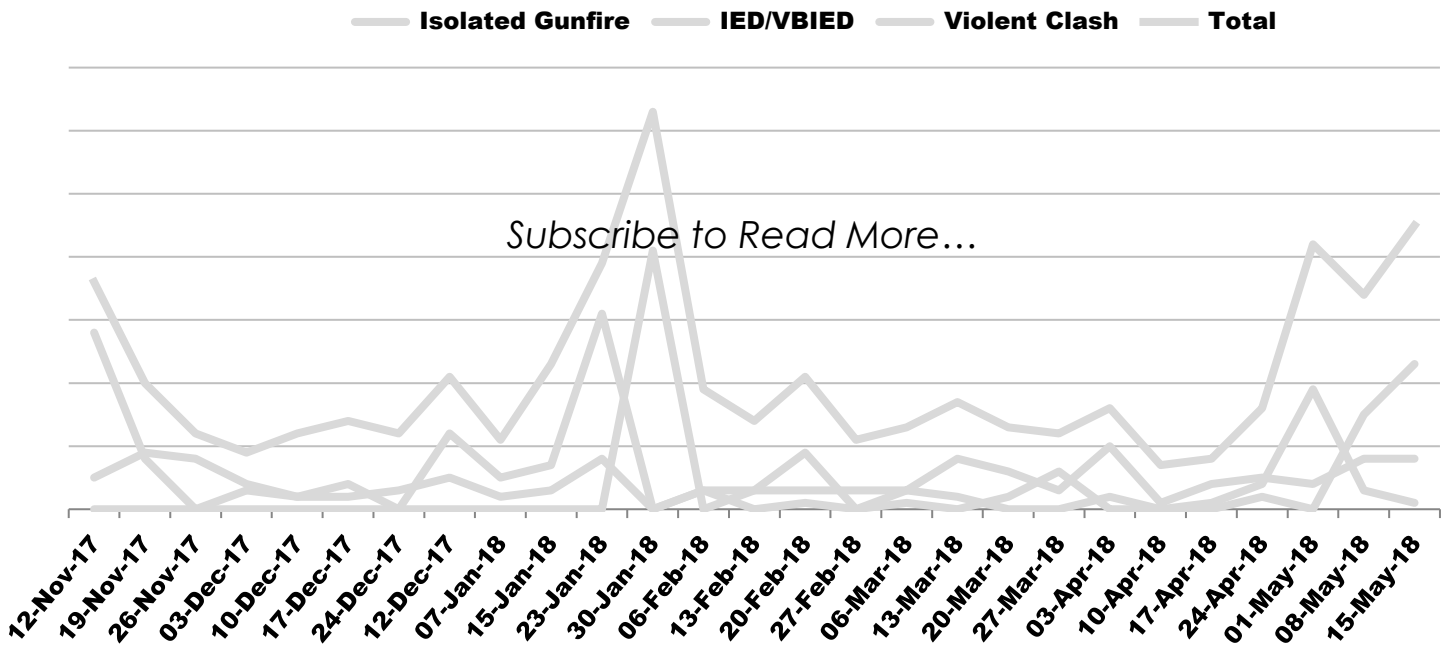
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by national district (Past week)



Nationwide Fatalities by Type of Attack (Past 27 Weeks)



Data Analysis

Whispering Bell recorded this week a total of 45 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 34 deaths reported last week and 42 the week before. This week, there was a relative increase in the number of fatalities from airstrikes, while IED/VBIED fatalities numbers decreased from the previous week. Derna and Sabha continue to represent the highest nationwide fatalities numbers. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 4 episodes of violent clashes, 7 cases of isolated gunfire, 3 IED/VBIED reports, 1 kidnapping, 3 airstrikes, and a mortar/rocket incident.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 13 incidents, including 9 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell sources reported in Tripoli three unidentified assailants carjacked a 2004 white Renault Samsung vehicle in the Souq Al-Sibt area in the afternoon on 11 May. Meanwhile, unidentified assailants riding a Toyota Hilux vehicle with tinted windows and no license plate, stole the belongings of two men in Tripoli's Tajoura area in the morning on 13 May. There was no further information related to the incident. Sources also reported a likely arson incident when a fire broke out in Bu Gheilan valley, on the main road from Tripoli to Gharyan, at night on 13 May. Initial reports suggest unidentified individuals deliberately set fire to the road. In a separate incident, a computer glitch affecting the passport control system caused temporary flight delays and diversions at Tripoli's Mitiga Airport.

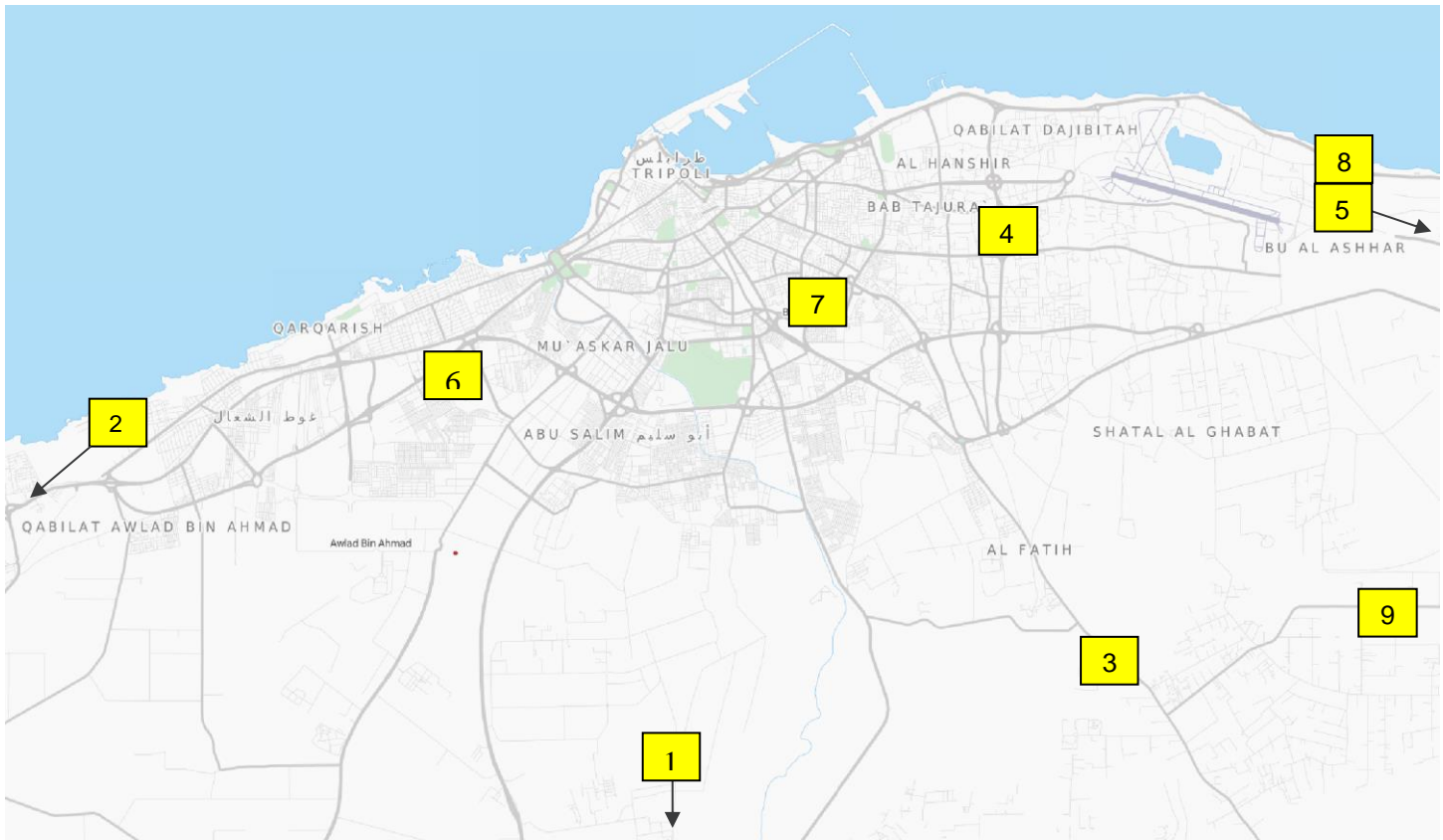
The week in Central Libya was marked by Sirte authorities dismantling two shells found in a farm in Sirte's Al-Dhair area on 14 May. The type of shells found remains unclear, though authorities frequently dismantle improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted by Islamic State (IS) insurgents in the past. Meanwhile, local reports suggest unidentified assailants attacked multiple vehicles parked in front of a mosque in the outskirts of Sirte's Al-Gharbyiat area in the afternoon on 13 May. The assailants were likely financially-motivated criminals.

Turning to southern Libya, mortar shells landed on different parts of Sabha at night on 15 May, despite reports of the Tebu Supreme Council of Elders and Dignitaries announcing the end of tribal clashes and the stabilization of the security situation along the city's highway on 15 May.

In Eastern Libya, the LNA carried out airstrikes targeting the Derna Protection Force (DPF) South-East of Derna, neighborhood 400, in the morning on 17 May. Reports suggest at least 10 LNA soldiers were killed during clashes with DPF militants on 16 May. The latest reports suggest the LNA's Al-Saiqa and Tarek Ibn Ziyad Brigades sent reinforcements to the city, with other reports suggesting at least 20 LNA battalions are currently mobilized on the outskirts of the city.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Dispute between Al-Damman and Khabesh battalions results in fatalities



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (11 May) Unidentified assailants carjack vehicle in Souq Al-Sibt
2. (12 May) Two security forces killed in drive-by shooting in Syad
3. (13 May) Militia member kills man inside coffee shop in Ain Zara
4. (13 May) Fire on main road from Tripoli to Gharyan
5. (12 May) Unidentified assailants rob two men in Tajoura
6. (15 May) Man's corpse found in unidentified area
7. (15 May) Deterrence Apparatus arrest 5 individuals in Ben Ashour
8. (15 May) Local human rights official kidnapped in Tajoura
9. (18 May) Militia dispute results in fatalities in Wadi Al-Rabe

Militia disputes

Reports suggest unidentified assailants killed two Jafara Security Directorate members in a drive by shooting at a checkpoint in Tripoli's Syad area, at night on 12 May. Initial reports suggest the drive by shooting incident was likely a personal dispute involving the militia members and the assailants. There is a strong possibility the assailants were criminals from Tripoli's Warshaffana area given past reports of the strong ties between criminals and locals in the area. Criminals would often protest the establishment of checkpoints in the area and directly challenge militias' control over territory. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, a Daman militia member from Tripoli's Tajoura area killed a local man from Ain Zara following a dispute inside a coffee shop belonging to the victim. There were no further reports of security incidents. Moreover, on 18 May, the Daman Battalion, confirmed the

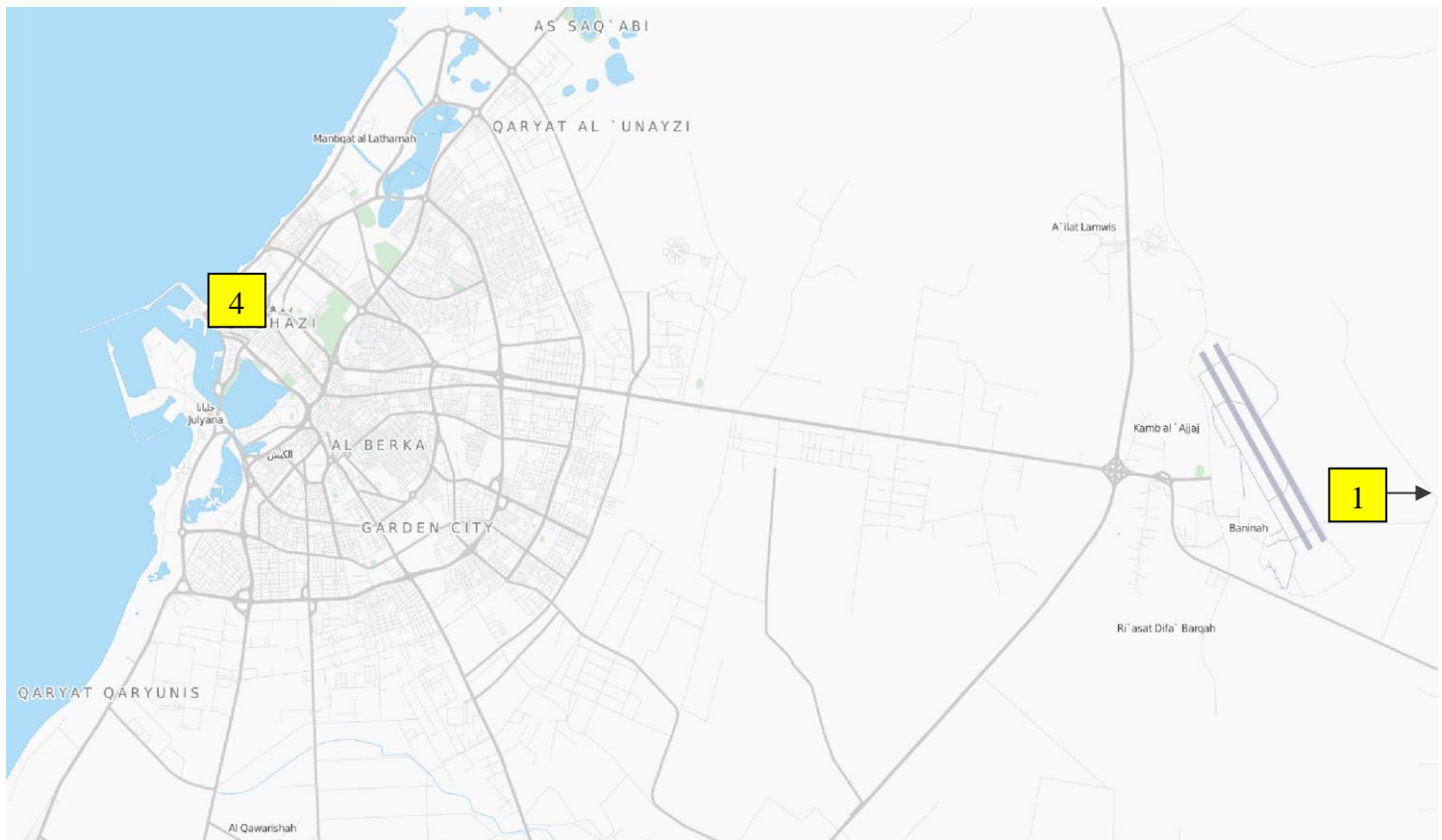
death of one of its members and another bystander, at the Al-Janeen Gas Station, in Tripoli's Wadi Al-Rabie area, before the sunset prayer. The clashes were reportedly between the Khabesh and Damman battalions, both affiliated with the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB), following the Damman battalion raiding and seizing compounds and summer houses belonging to a family of Khabesh commanders. Tensions escalated following the Damman battalion setting fire to the family's house and gas station.

Kidnapping incident

Reports suggest the president of the Libyan International Foundation for Human Rights was kidnapped in Tripoli's Tajoura area near Al-Najma Factory in the afternoon on 15 May. Reports suggest the kidnapped man is of Palestinian origin. Human rights activists remain subject to kidnappings and/or arrests across Libyan cities

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Improvised explosive device (IED) explosion kills man in Souq Al-Hout area



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (14 May) Haftar receives Italian Ambassador to Libya
2. (15 May) Meeting regarding security plan in Ramadan
3. (15 May) HoR to discuss moving base to Benghazi
4. (19 May) IED explosion kills man in Souq Al-Hout

IED explosion

Local reports suggest an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion resulted in the death of a man in Benghazi's Souq Al-Hout area. The director of the information office at the Al-Jalaa hospital stated that the victim was killed by shrapnel throughout the body. IEDs previously planted by terrorist groups continue to pose a threat to civilian lives across Benghazi.

Security plan during Ramadan

On 15 May, the director of the security directorate, Colonel Salah Huwaidi, held a meeting with the joint security chamber to draft a security plan for the city during the holy month of Ramadan. The meeting was reportedly held at the directorate's headquarters, in presence of all of the city's security and military services. The proposed security plan was likely in response to any insurgents potentially utilizing the holy month of Ramadan to undergo opportunistic attacks across the city.

HoR discuss moving to Benghazi

The head of the House of Representatives (HoR), Agila Saleh reportedly welcomed the call by a number of HoR members for the transfer of the HoR to the city of Benghazi. According to Saleh, the possible transfer of the HoR to Benghazi was scheduled to be discussed at the next sitting of the HoR on 22 May. In a statement, Saleh reconfirmed that the rightful and legal location for the HoR is Benghazi, as per the Constitutional Declaration. Following the aftermath of the 2014 elections, the HoR was to be located in Benghazi, though poor security led to its establishment in Tobruk. The potential relocation of the HoR to Benghazi would highlight an improved security situation in the city, though the official date of relocation remains unclear.

6. What's next

Revival of East-West divide amid growing political rhetoric

POLITICAL FORECAST

On 14 May, The Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) announced that the first phase of the Libyan National Conference process had concluded, with another 20 meetings planned across Libya to continue the wide surveying of Libyans. The national conference is part of the UN's wider action plan. Meanwhile, the Presidential Council (PC) announced the formation of a new force tasked with securing and protecting Libya's South following the deteriorated security situation. The head of the PC, Fayez Al-Serraj, tasked the Western, central, and Tripoli military zones, with implementing necessary measures, and to be fully prepared within 10 days. Moreover, amid the LNA's ongoing siege of Derna, reports highlight increased local backlash of the intensified offensive against the city. A member of the High Council of State (HCS) called on the UN envoy to Libya and the PC to convene an emergency meeting with the UN security council regarding the protection of civilians. Haftar's Derna offensive may further fuel East-West tensions, and shift focus on implementing national security, instead of drafting a roadmap that would see successful elections in 2018.

SECURITY FORECAST

This week, Tripoli witnessed an increase in security incidents related to militia movements. The latest reports suggest a militia convoy was moving West of Tripoli International Airport (TIA), whilst authorities diffused two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) near the highway on 19 May. Militia movements surrounding the TIA could fuel tensions, should attacks be carried out in the area. In the West, reports suggest militia movements and tensions between pro-General National Congress (GNC) elements from Zintan and Sorman militias, highlighting potential tensions in the West in the upcoming days. The Presidential Council (PC) announced a newly-formed force to protect the South, amid tribal clashes, though reports suggest a peace charter was signed between the tribes. The Wadi Shatti Council of Elders rejected the PC's new force, suggesting potential tensions following their mobilization. In Derna, the Libyan National Army (LNA) will likely continue to intensify its offensive with heavy artillery and airstrikes, whilst the Derna Protection Force (DPF) attempts to thwart LNA advances. A potential advance into the city would cost the rivals further human loss.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "*Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*", the author, Jalel Harchaoui, discusses how despite Haftar's recovery, his absence allowed for his diminishing centrality to be evident, whilst noting that military players in Northwest Libya are becoming increasingly ambitious. "As Libya's civil war enters its fifth year, one aspect hasn't changed since the conflict broke out: exclusionary postures that rely on force as the main justification for political dominance still offer rewards to armed players. As long as that is the case, there will continue to be a risk of dangerous escalations in the country's east, west and south. Haftar's maneuvering notwithstanding, it will be difficult for him to avoid becoming universally perceived as a military commander who struggles to hold the East, let alone enter northwestern Libya. This in turn will make some players in northwest Libya and elsewhere more ambitious and intransigent. Foreign states with sway in Libya can help lower the tension by being less impatient and by carefully examining how their combined influence distorts Libyans' incentives." said Harachaoui.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for *ReliefWeb*, the author, Darine El Hage, discusses the hope that springs from Libyan youth and local communities, and highlights their ongoing peacebuilding efforts amid Libya's turmoil. "Of Libya's 6.5 million people, more than one million, about 17 percent, depend on humanitarian aid to survive, the United Nations says. Youth unemployment has hung for years around 38 percent, according to the World Bank, which means that many Libyan youth have become easy recruitment targets for militias or extremist groups, who offer them an income and a sense of belonging in a country that is increasingly short on both. But amid Libya's web of communal conflicts—among tribal, regional and ethnic groups—a generational shift also is underway. In a nation where tradition reserves leadership roles for a community's elders, many Libyan youth are rejecting communal divisions and stereotypes that help fuel the continued violence. Young Libyans have taken the lead in developing the country's first generation of civil society organizations, many working to improve education, human rights and better relations among communal groups." said El Hage.

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