



1. The Big Picture

Increased IS movements near Sirte amid tensions in West

The week was marked by reports of suspicious movements and an increased presence of suspected Islamic State (IS) militants near Sirte and Bani Walid, which likely prompted authorities to raise the security alert to critical. Meanwhile, the new wave of sanctions targeting alleged human smugglers could have ramifications on the security situation West of the capital city, Tripoli.

On 06 Jun, Whispering Bell sources confirmed likely IS militants established an illegitimate checkpoint on the road between Zillah and Waddan, opening fire on a vehicle and subsequently killing two men from the same family, reportedly from the Gaddafi tribe, at approximately 0900hrs. Reports indicate the IS militants later released a young nephew of the killed men, claiming they had mistaken the family for Libyan National Army (LNA) soldiers. However, in a clear attempt to fabricate a narrative of the incident, IS issued a statement claiming its fighters had attacked a checkpoint in the Al Jufra national district, "killing two of Haftar's forces". The incident stands as the latest indicator of the freedom of movement with which pockets of IS militants operate in the Al Jufra national district.

The attack closely followed the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) precision strike targeting four IS militants, including a prominent IS commander, Abd Al-A'ati Ashtaiwy, near Bani Walid's Shmeikh area on 06 Jun. Meanwhile, as part of the GNA-sanctioned "Nation's Storm" counter-terrorism operation, "Nation's Storm", four suspected IS militants were arrested near Bani Walid in the As Saddadah area, at night on 09 Jun. A resident from the Qaryat Shumaykh area, reported 10 armed vehicles between the areas of Qaryat Shumaykh and the east

of Bani Waled, heading toward As Saddadah. Even though there is a known extremist presence in areas near Bani Walid and Sirte, the timing of the GNA's latest arrests, closely following an AFRICOM drone strike, could raise the possibility of a politically-motivated campaign.

Overall, while IS' presence in Libya remains less focused on territorial expansion and more on establishing vital supply lines, the group will likely continue carrying out opportunistic attacks as this would limit the militants' exposure. The group could also exploit the LNA's Derna offensive and losses suffered by Al-Qaeda (AQ) in the city to increase the frequency of such attacks in the short term.

On the political front, UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctioned six individuals, including four Libyan nationals, for human trafficking and migrant smuggling. The Libyan smugglers are known to operate in Sabratha, Zawiya, Zuwara, Garaboli, and other areas in Libya's West. The sanctions went into effect on 07 Jun and will impose a global asset freeze and travel ban on the six individuals. A global asset freeze and travel ban is unlikely, however, to eliminate the presence of smuggling networks as this remains a lucrative business for locals. Instead, the sanctions could have significant ramifications on the security situation "on the ground" and in Western parts of the country.

KEY POINTS

- Critical security alert raised near Sirte
- US AFRICOM strike targets IS
- Tensions could increase in the West



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2. National Security Map

US AFRICOM conducts precision airstrike near Bani Walid; prominent IS commander killed

Key

THREAT INDICATORS

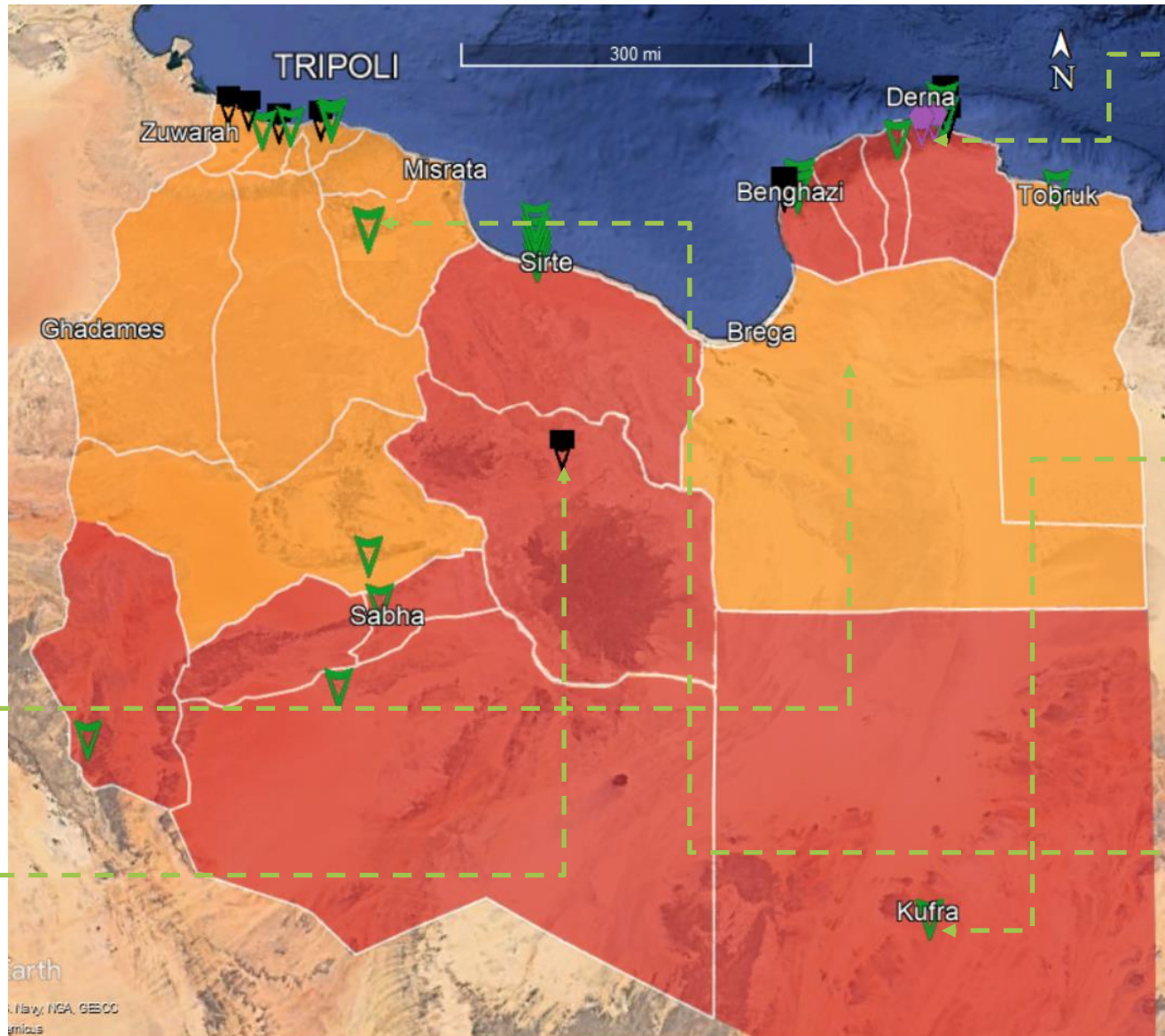
- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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

The Commander of the Rapid Intervention Battalion, Imad Al-Senoussi, confirmed an agreement with the municipal deans and region's dignitaries to intensify patrols inside and around Al-Wahat areas, including Jalu, Awjilah and Ajdabiya, and the formation of a joint security room on 05 Jun.

Reports suggest Islamic State (IS) militants established a fake CP on the road linking Zella and Waddan in the morning on 06 Jun. The militants opened fire on a man's vehicle from the Gaddafi tribe, killing him, and his relative. The victim's 11-year-old cousin reportedly drove back with the deceased.



Reports suggest LNA forces raided multiple houses and bases used as shelters for militant groups in Derna's Al-Hay Al-Sayida Khadija area, including the house of prominent Al-Qaeda (AQ) leader, Sufian Bin Qammu, after days of clashes. Additionally, on 09 Jun, the LNA killed 3 prominent Al-Qaeda leaders during clashes.

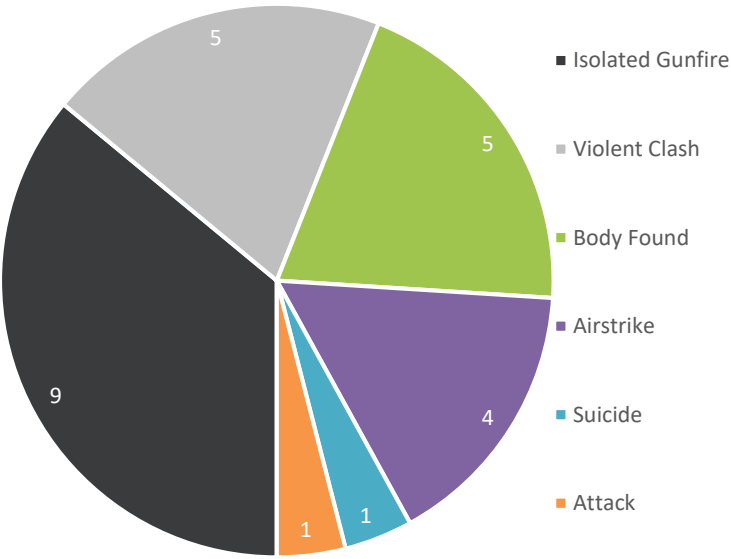
The commander of the Subul Al Salam Battalion of the Libyan National Army (LNA), revealed information related to the explosion at the battalion's headquarters in Kufra on 07 Jun. The commander stated the fire was due to an electrical fault and spread to an ammunition warehouse, which resulted in the explosion and damage to at least five military vehicles and four power generators. There were no reports of fatalities or casualties.

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) claimed responsibility for conducting a precision airstrike near Bani Walid, killing four suspected Islamic State (IS) militants, including a prominent IS commander, Abd Al-'ati Ashtaiwy, on 06 Jun. The air strike was conducted in coordination with the Government of National Accord (GNA), with no reports of civilian casualties.

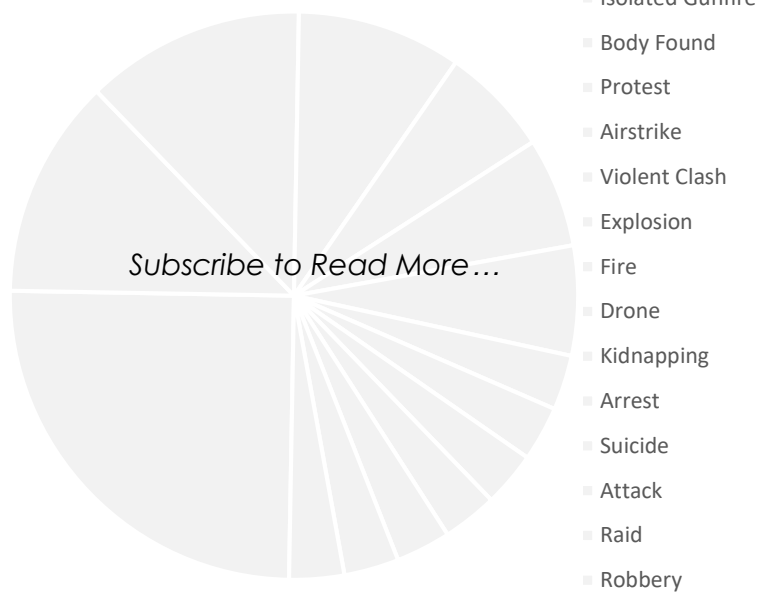
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Decrease in number of incidents and fatalities recorded in Tripoli

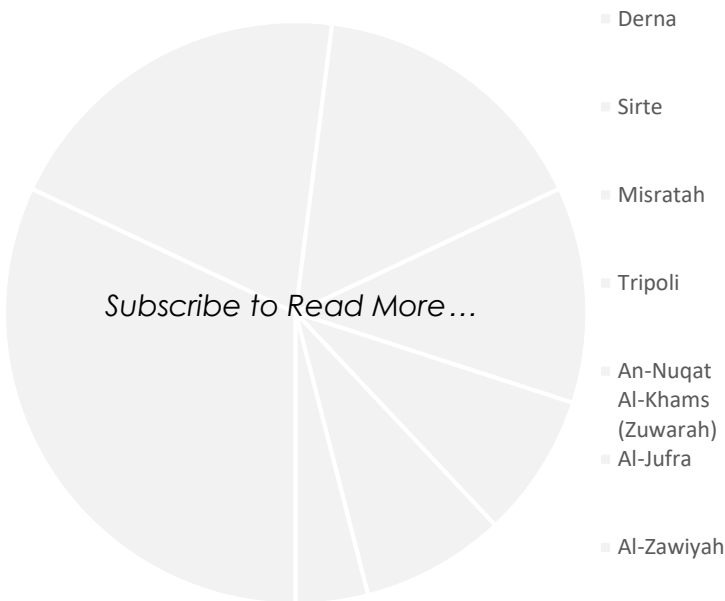
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



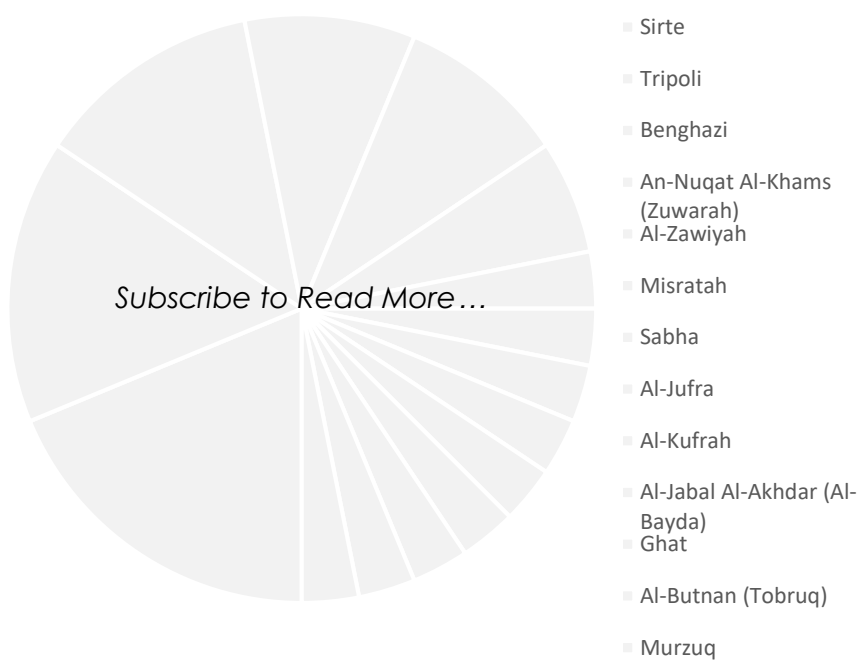
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



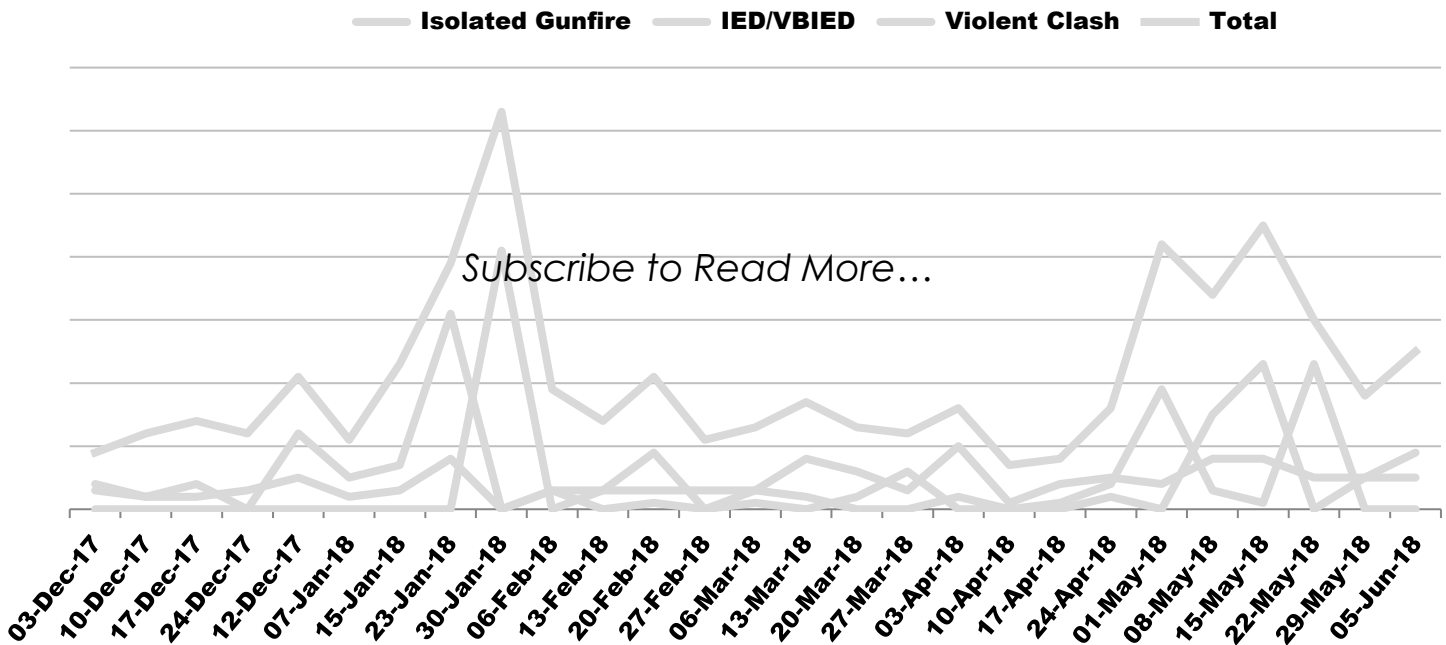
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 25 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 18 deaths reported last week and 30 the week before. This week, while fatalities numbers from violent clashes and the Derna offensive remained unchanged, there was an increase in fatalities from isolated gunfire incidents and airstrikes. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 8 cases of isolated gunfire, 2 episodes of violent clashes, a total of 5 bodies found, 4 protests, 1 kidnapping, and a drone-related incident.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 9 incidents, including 4 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell recorded in Tripoli a robbery that resulted in a murder. On 02 Jun, unidentified assailants killed the former head of the Administrative Development Centre and his Sub-Saharan African worker near his farm in Tripoli's Tajoura area at approximately 1100hrs. Initial reports suggest the victims were killed upon attempting to prevent the assailants from fleeing the scene.

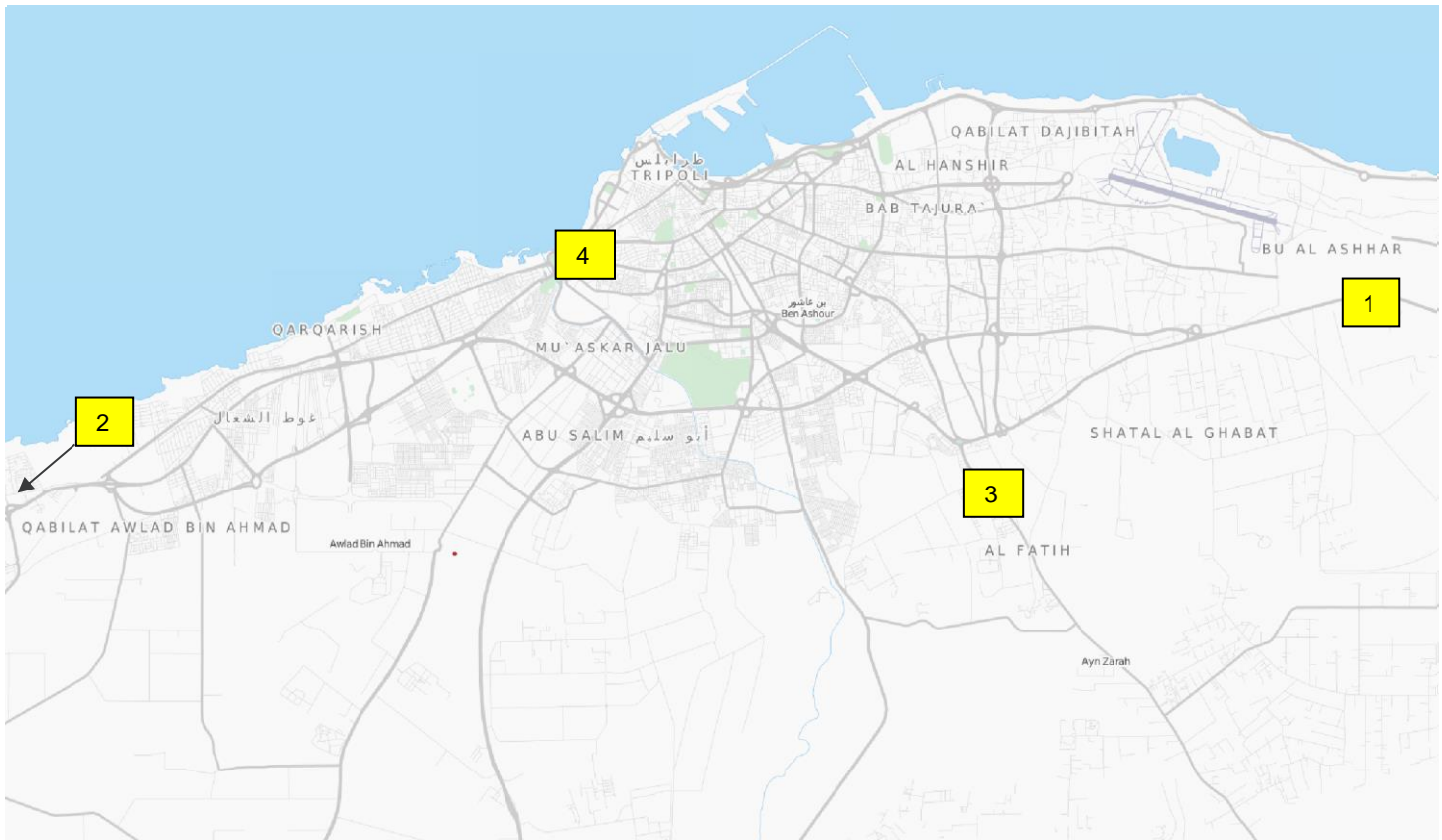
The week in Central Libya was marked by new reports of IS movements in Sirte and nearby areas. Authorities have upgraded the state of alert to critical due to suspicious movements in Sirte. Thus far, there is no further information related to the development. Recent reports suggest a surge in suspicious movements across the city, likely an increased presence of remnants of the Islamic State (IS) and other groups in the area.

Turning to southern Libya, Whispering Bell noted a relative decrease in the number of incidents, though the week was marked by reports of strikes allegedly targeting foreign mercenaries in Sabha. The LNA Air Force reportedly conducted airstrikes targeting Chadian mercenary positions South of Sabha, near Umm Al-Aranib, on 04 Jun. Meanwhile, Whispering Bell received unconfirmed reports of a kidnapping of 3 employees of Libya's Al-Madar telecommunications company between Samnu and Tamanhint, South of Libya, in the afternoon on 06 Jun. The victims were reportedly riding a blue 2008 KIA spectra vehicle and were kidnapped upon installing a 3G antenna in the area. The kidnapping, if confirmed, will be reflected in next week's report to maintain consistency between reporting periods.

In Eastern Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a continuation and intensification of clashes in Derna as the LNA announced the offensive's second phase. According to local reports, 4 Libyan National Army (LNA) soldiers were killed, while 9 others were injured, in the clashes between the LNA and the Derna Protection Force (DPF) South and West of Derna on 06 Jun. The LNA also killed and carried out multiple arrests of prominent terrorist elements, including the Al-Qaeda (AQ) leader, Sufian Bin Qammu, and DMSC founder, Attiyah Saaed Shaeri.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

27 Bridge clashes between Warshaffana groups and SOF; road closure



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (02 Jun) Head of Administrative Development Centre killed
2. (05 Jun) Warshaffana militia attack SOF on Coastal Road
3. (07 Jun) University students schedule protest
4. (08 Jun) Two men arrested in Souq Al-Jumaa

Militia attack on Coastal Road CP

A Warshaffana militia attacked the Zintan Special Operations Force (SOF) at the 27th Bridge (Kubri 27) on the Coastal Road, resulting in an unconfirmed number of fatalities and casualties, including a prominent SOF commander, First Lt. Sharaf al-Din Muhammad, at night on 05 Jun. The clashes also resulted in the closure of the Coastal Road at the 27th Bridge. Initial reports suggest the clashes occurred due to an attempt by a Warshaffana militia to control petrol stations in the Al Mayah area, on the Coastal Road, likely to facilitate fuel smuggling operations. Unconfirmed reports indicate the involvement of a prominent local militia in Warshaffana, in the attack on the SOF, though other local groups, including the Tina Brigade, were likely involved. In response to the commander's death and the attack, the SOF declared an anti-crime operation dubbed "Operation Martyr's duty", in coordination with the Joint Operations Room, the 55 Brigade led by

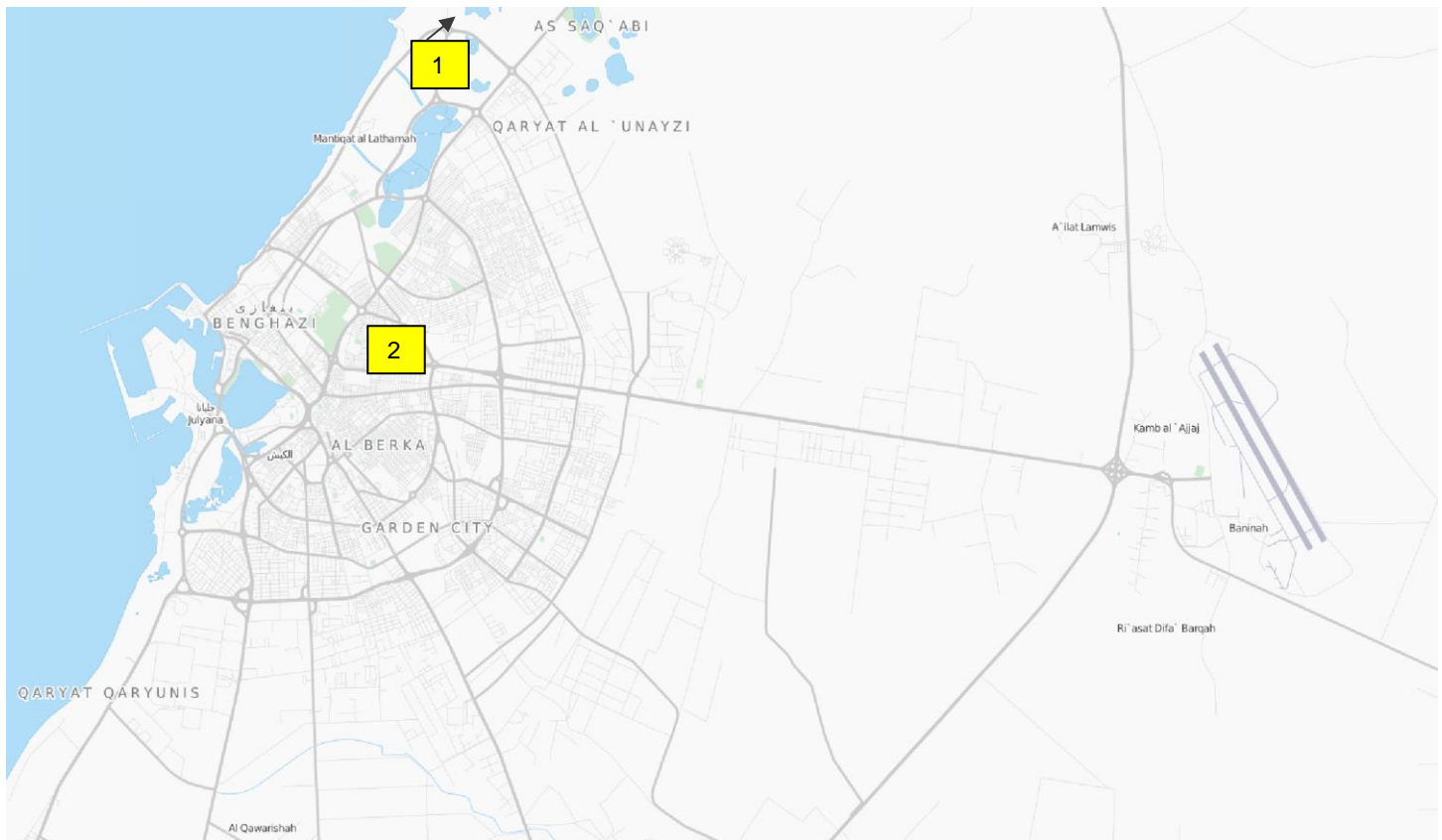
Muammar Dawi, and 4th Major General Ops Room against Warshaffana armed groups. The operation reportedly covered Warshaffana's Qarqouza (Gargouza), Al Mayah, Tina, and Hashan areas. In the latest reports, the SOF declared the end of its operation to secure these areas. Sources confirmed the roads were reopened and a clear situation on 06 Jun. While there are likely broader political dynamics at play in the latest clashes, they appear related to local grievances and attempts to benefit from lucrative smuggling operations. There has been growing animosity between "Sborto", a local Warshaffana commander, and the Zintani SOF in the past month.

SDF reportedly arrest two men

Two men were reported missing from the Al-Ghrarat area of Tripoli's Souq Al Jum'aa on 08 Jun. Sources suggest the abduction was likely an arrest by the Deterrence Apparatus, former Special Deterrence Force (SDF). If confirmed, the arrest could escalate tensions among locals, who often accuse the SDF of arbitrary arrests and detention. The SDF established control over Tripoli's Souq Al Jum'aa area in Oct 2017.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Indiscriminate gunfire injures civilian in front of Al-Jumhouria Bank



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (05 Jun) Fire breaks out in forest in Ras Al-Hilal
2. (07 Jun) Civilian wounded by indiscriminate gunfire
3. (07 Jun) Central Security Chamber holds meeting

Indiscriminate gunfire

Reports suggest Benghazi's Al-Jalaa Hospital for Surgery and Accidents received a civilian who was wounded by indiscriminate gunfire in front of Al-Jumhouria Bank on Benghazi's Twenty Street on 07 Jun. Further reports suggest the 35-year-old man was wounded by shrapnel and is in a stable condition after receiving necessary care in the hospital. Beyond the risk posed by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), indiscriminate gunfire continues to pose a threat to civilians in Benghazi.

Fire in forest

Local reports suggest a fire broke out in a forest in Benghazi's Ra's Al Hilal area at night on 05 Jun. The motive behind the fire remains unclear, though it was likely due to high temperatures. Additional reports suggest the firefighters failed to control the fire. There were no further security incidents reported.

Central Security Chamber meeting

The Head of Benghazi's Central Security Chamber, met with officials of Benghazi's central security room on 07 Jun. The meeting discussed the implementation of the second phase of the Chamber's work, and an agreement to restructure the Chamber, and direct its work to achieve the objectives of the second phase. Additionally, cooperating with the city's security services operating in the city, including the municipal guards, was also discussed. According to the head of the Chamber, it will exercise its supervisory oversight role to assess the performance of military units and security departments nominally under the Chamber's command. Benghazi's Central Security Chamber remains tasked with ensuring cooperation between the security services to secure the city, and to prepare to thwart any potential attacks.

6. What's next

Rivals likely to prioritize gaining leverage in run-up to elections

POLITICAL FORECAST

Following the Paris Summit's non-binding agreements between the country's main rivals, little has been done on the ground to cooperatively work on setting the right political and security environment for the upcoming elections. However, international players remain supportive of elections, with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reiterating support for the call, in a French-drafted Presidential statement. Additionally, the UNSC sanctioned 6 individuals for human trafficking and migrant smuggling, a decision welcomed by the National Oil Corporation (NOC) who requested the sanctions be expanded to fuel and oil smugglers. Meanwhile, an eighth meeting of the Libya Economic Dialogue was held, in which economic reforms were agreed upon. However, the former governor of the Eastern-based Central Bank opposed the reforms, stating that they may lead to the collapse of the economy. Whilst unifying the central banks remains at the top of the agenda, the two institutions are fragmented and in opposition. Despite the loopholes, elections remain scheduled, and the main players are likely to prioritize gaining leverage in the upcoming period.

SECURITY FORECAST

This week, Tripoli witnessed a decrease in militia movements and security incidents, though clashes erupted between a Warshaffana militia and the Special Operations Force (SOF) at the 27th Bridge on the Coastal Road. Tensions remain in the capital city and across the West, where Government of National Accord (GNA) popularity is decreasing and amid unconfirmed reports of a Zintan-Misrata alliance planning to disrupt the status-quo. Authorities will likely continue to be vigilant and conduct operations in areas near Bani Walid and Sirte, amid reports of increased suspicious movements and a critical state of alert. Moreover, tensions may escalate between pro-GNA elements and pro General National Congress (GNC) elements in the areas of Surman, Sabratha and Al-Zawiya in the short-term. Beyond, the South remains in a dire security situation, though tribal clashes have come to a tentative halt. In the East, the army will likely advance further and possibly claim Derna's victory in the short-term. However, following a potential victory in Derna, concerns will likely emerge over the LNA's next steps and whether a move towards the West is expected, which could reignite the East-West divide and exacerbate tensions.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In a press statement by the US Charge d'Affaires Stephanie Williams, published by the *US Embassy in Libya*, Williams discusses the outcome and aspirations of the eighth meeting of the Libya Economic Dialogue. "We are encouraged by the commitment of Libya's political and economic leadership to address these challenges and reach agreement on the financial arrangements, but more must be done to address exceptionally difficult circumstances Libyans continue to face on a daily basis. We believe that progress on economic reforms will support stabilization and improve the lives of all Libyans. We urge institutions and communities to come together to protect Libya's natural resources and distribute Libya's wealth fairly to communities making legitimate demands for basic infrastructure and services. With elections on the horizon, the Libyan people will be able to exercise their voice and vote for leaders who can be good stewards of Libya's wealth. We urge all political leaders, ministers, and Libyan government officials entrusted with public resources to manage them judiciously, increase transparency, and minimize fraud, waste, and abuse of power. As noted in the 29 May 2018 Paris declaration, Libya's institutions, including the Central Bank, must unify in order to effectively implement the change the country requires"

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for the "*Atlantic Council*", the author, Karim Mezran, discusses the scheduled elections, its obstacles, and potential alternatives previously proposed. "The unification of the country is the most cumbersome task but an essential precursor to all other objectives in Libya. Today, de facto, the East and West are separated and the South is almost inaccessible and isolated. Uniting the regions by way of an agreement will be an important step forward for establishing security and restarting the economy. Disarmament and stricter border security could be implemented in order to reduce not only the terrorist phenomenon but also crime and criminal activities in general, which have become increasingly threatening. Improving and kick-starting the currently shuttered economy will happen also through the unification of main institutions such as the Central Bank, the National Oil Company, the Libyan Investment Authority, which are now doubled in Tripoli and Benghazi. This option, if pursued, allows time to resolve thorny issues. It also opens the space to involve large strata of the population in the building of institutions and their strengthening through the provision of services and the creation of work opportunities," said Mezran.

About Whispering Bell



Whispering Bell is a Dubai-based security and risk management consultancy advising clients in challenging and emerging markets throughout the Middle East and North Africa. We establish an in depth understanding of the political and security environments in which our clients operate. We are staffed by people who live and work in the region, understand the local context and speak the languages of the countries in which we report. Whispering Bell works with clients in the region to provide the following services:

- Political and Security Risk Assessments
- Embedded Security Consultants
- Journey Management and In-Country Facilitation
- Due Diligence and Investigations
- Financial and Market Advisory
- Technical and Information Security Services

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