



1. The Big Picture

IS attack targets Kaam CP; heavy clashes erupt in Tripoli

This week was marked by an Islamic State (IS) attack targeting a checkpoint between Khoms and Zliten. Meanwhile, heavy clashes erupted in Tripoli's South between Al-Kaniat militia and the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB). Thus far, the clashes have undermined the capital city's security outlook and threaten to expand across other areas of Tripoli.

On 25 Aug, IS claimed responsibility via its Amaq publication for the armed attack targeting the Kaam checkpoint, West of Zliten. The attack resulted in at least 7 fatalities and is the closest documented IS attack to the capital city after the 02 May complex attack on the High National Election Commission (HNEC) building in Tripoli.

With the latest Kaam CP attack, IS has demonstrated yet again capability and intent to carry out attacks across the country. The attack demonstrated IS militants' capability to rapidly mobilize given it closely followed an alleged audio recording of IS self-declared leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi on 22 Aug. In the recording, Al-Baghdadi called on followers in Libya, Syria and Iraq to mobilize and carry out attacks, while urging them to remain "patient". The attack highlights how localized the IS threat can be in Libya. One of the attackers reportedly lived in the Souq Al Khamis area, near Al-Khoms, which is unusual given past hit-and-run operations where militants would attack and later flee the scene.

Meanwhile, there were reports of heavy gunfire and explosions in Tripoli's Salah Eddein, Khela Al-Furjan and Wadi Al-Rabie areas, while the road in front of Al-Yarmouk Camp in the Khela Al-Furjan area was blocked by the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) due to heavy clashes

between the Al-Kaniat militia and the TRB at approximately 0700hrs on 27 Aug. The clashes erupted on 26 Aug but resumed in the early hours of 27 Aug.

The clashes follow a week of tensions building up between Al-Kaniat and the TRB, corroborating Whispering Bell's assessment in the past weekly report over the potential for tensions to escalate. Meanwhile, alliances between militias, whether newly-formed or existing, could expand the clashes to other areas across the capital city. Some observers suggest the recent peace agreement between Misrata, Tarhouna, and Zintan could indicate the beginning of a coalition against Tripoli's main militias to regain lost territory in the capital city. There remains the possibility of an agreement given Al-Kaniat, a General National Congress (GNC)-leaning militia, has proven it can be amenable to negotiate, including with the Government of National Accord (GNA) and/or the Libyan National Army (LNA). However, should Al-Kaniat seek to expand further into Tripoli, it would require the support of Misrata or Zintan to engage pro-GNA militias.

Overall, the clashes are yet another reminder of the GNA's lack of oversight over militias nominally under its command, which could further undermine its public image. Politically, eastern factions would likely exploit the clashes to renew allegations and reinforce the narrative that Tripoli is under the control of militias.

KEY POINTS

- IS attack follows Baghdadi recording
- Clashes could expand further North
- Al-Kaniat amenable to negotiate



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2. National Security Map

IS claims Kaam CP attack via Amaq publication; 7 fatalities and 10 casualties

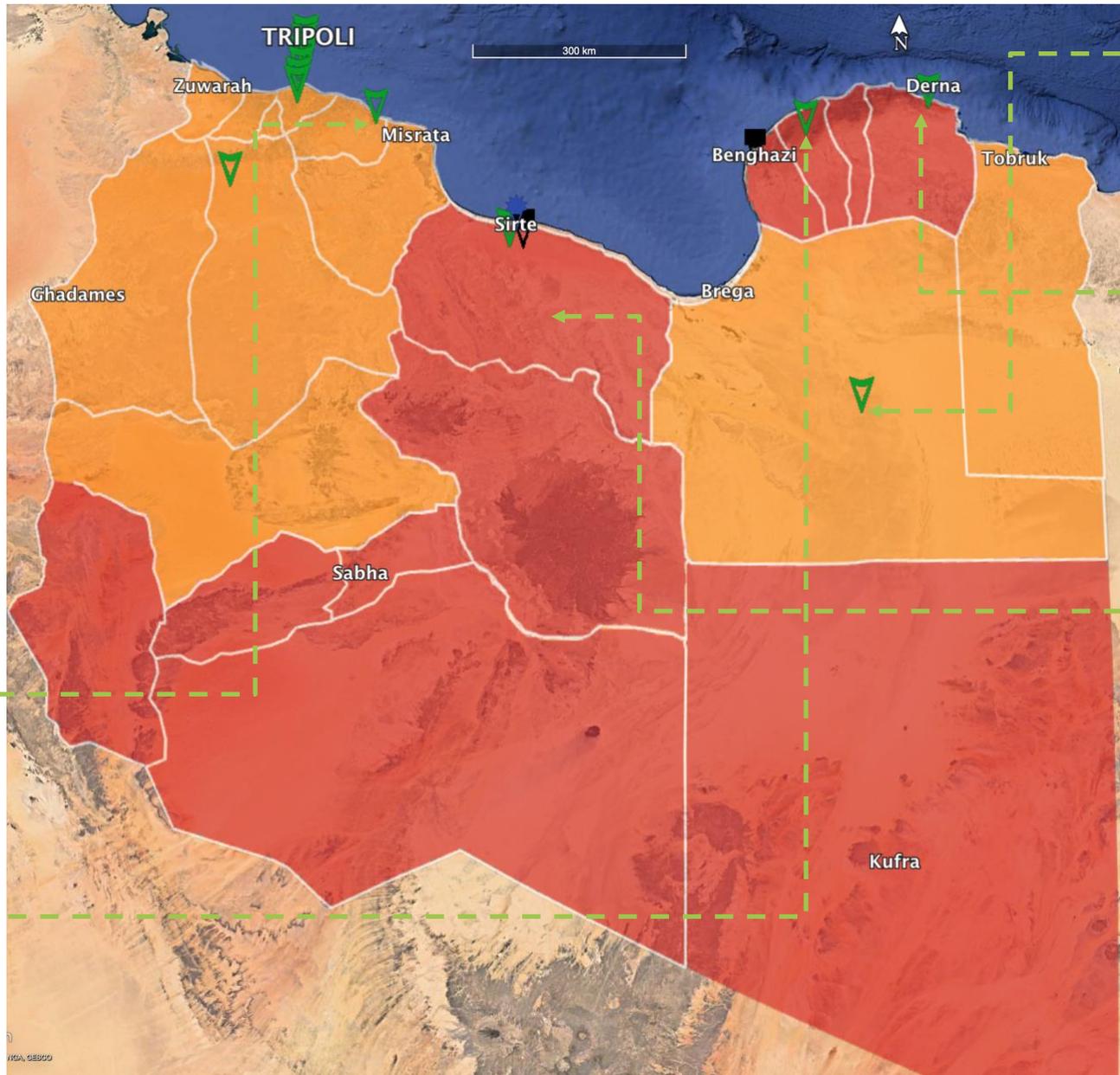
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



Locals reported the coastal road between Khoms and Zliten was reopened in the evening on 23 Aug with normal traffic conditions after a temporary closure due to the Islamic State (IS) armed attack targeting the Kaam checkpoint, West of Zliten on 23 Aug. The death toll of the Kaam CP attack rose to 7, with reports of at least 10 injuries.

Locals in the eastern city of Marj protested against the lack of cash and other issues related to the liquidity crisis on 19 Aug. The protestors closed the city's main road while calling on authorities to solve the liquidity crisis. Locals accuse the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) of a misdistribution of cash.

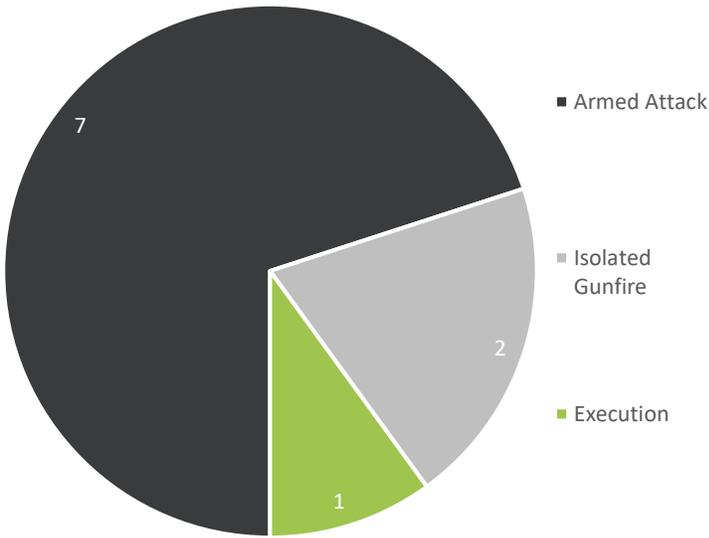
Local reports from 25 Aug suggest security forces arrested a criminal group involved in smuggling fuel to terrorist elements in the Municipality of Jalu.

The Ajdabiya Operations Room confirmed it arrested Mraje'a Sha'iri, a prominent Derna Protection Force (DPF) commander, on 19 Aug. Reports suggest Sha'iri, also known as Mraje'a Al-Kabili, attempted to hide after fleeing the theatre of operations in Derna's centre. Sha'iri reportedly maintained close ties to Abdelhakim Belhadj and other prominent Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) elements. Meanwhile, there are emerging reports suggesting some LNA battalions positioned on the outskirts of the city could be complicit in enabling some DPF militants to flee. Absent further information, such allegations remain difficult to ascertain.

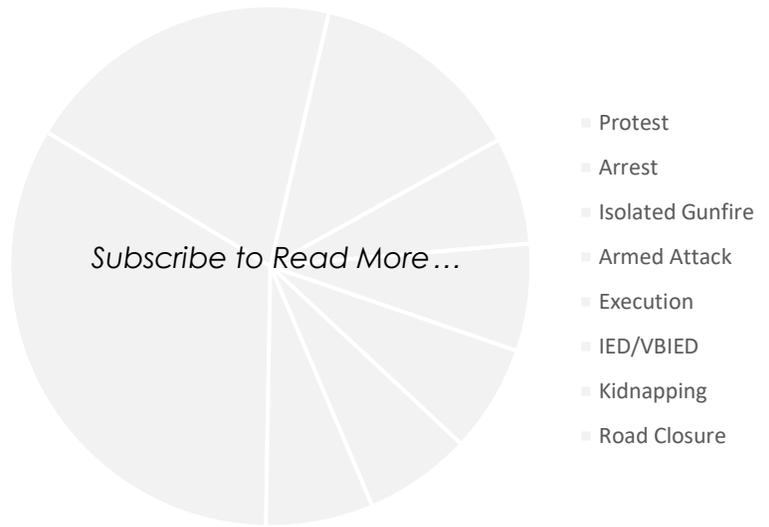
Reports suggest the Libyan National Army's (LNA) Major General Salem Duraik, commander of the Greater Sirte Operations Room, made a surprise field visit to oversee the 519 Ajdabiya Infantry units' positions in the Oil Crescent area and greet soldiers during the Eid Adha period on 22 Aug. The LNA remains on high alert in the Oil Crescent, though there have been no reported suspicious movements. Meanwhile, on 24 Aug, the LNA's 128 Reconnaissance Infantry Brigade, began a reconnaissance patrol from the southern Oil Crescent area toward Al Jufrah and Sirte National Districts, including areas near the Al Mabrouk oil field.

3. Nationwide Security Analysis Nationwide fatalities decrease during Eid Adha period

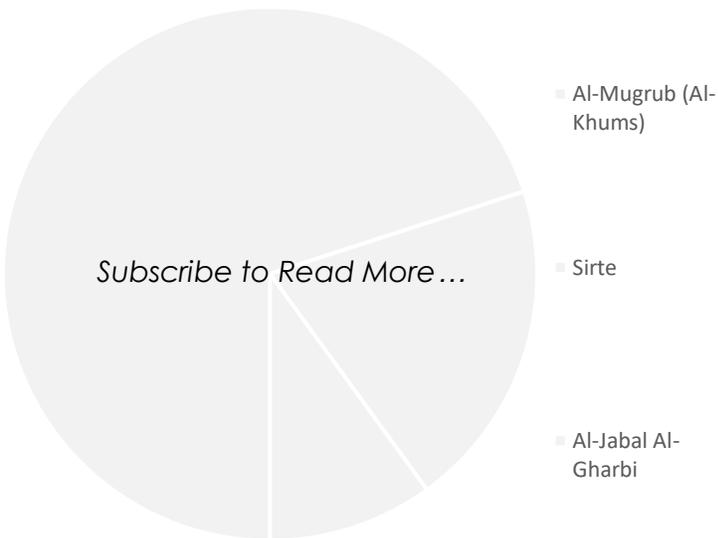
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



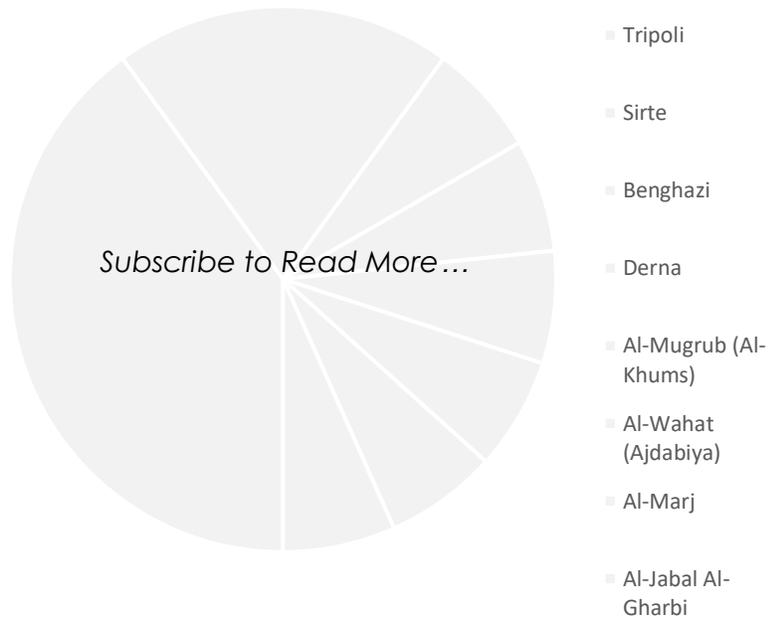
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



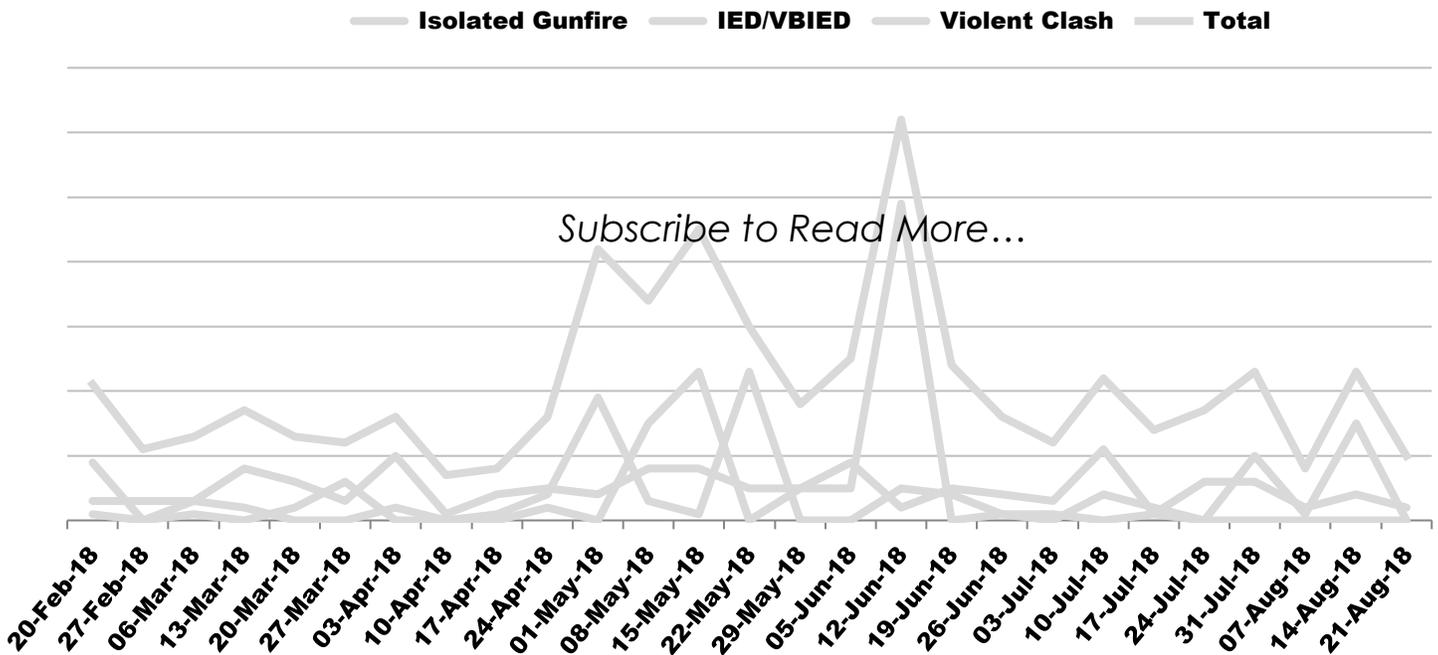
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 10 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 23 deaths reported last week and 8 the week before. This week saw a significant decrease in the number of fatalities recorded during the Eid Adha period, though IS' attack targeting the Kaam checkpoint accounted for the majority of fatalities. The violent clashes between Al-Kaniat and other Tripoli-based militias were not accounted for during the reporting period and will be reflected in next week's report. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 5 protests, 2 cases of isolated gunfire, 3 arrests, 1 kidnapping, and an IED/VBIED report in Sirte.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 8 incidents, including 6 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell recorded in Tripoli a kidnapping involving militia members. Reports suggest the Tajoura Lions Battalion (Osoud Tajoura), affiliated with the Al-Bugra militia, kidnapped a member of the Daman Battalion militia in Tripoli's Ghot Al-Shaal area on 19 Aug. Information related to the incident remains unclear. There is a possibility of escalation between Al-Bugra militia and other Tripoli-based militias as tensions remains across the capital city. Meanwhile, protests continued across the capital city. In Tripoli's Algeria Square, protestors called for the return of the recently-dissolved Fuel and Gas Crisis Committee and the revoking of the decision to sack the Committee's head, Milad Al Hajrasi, at approximately 1830hrs on 18 Aug. The National Oil Corporation (NOC) subsidiary Brega Marketing Company recently stated the Fuel and Gas Crisis Committee was an illegal entity that misappropriated anti-smuggling efforts of others. The claims sparked public anger and Al Hajrasi continues to benefit from widespread public support.

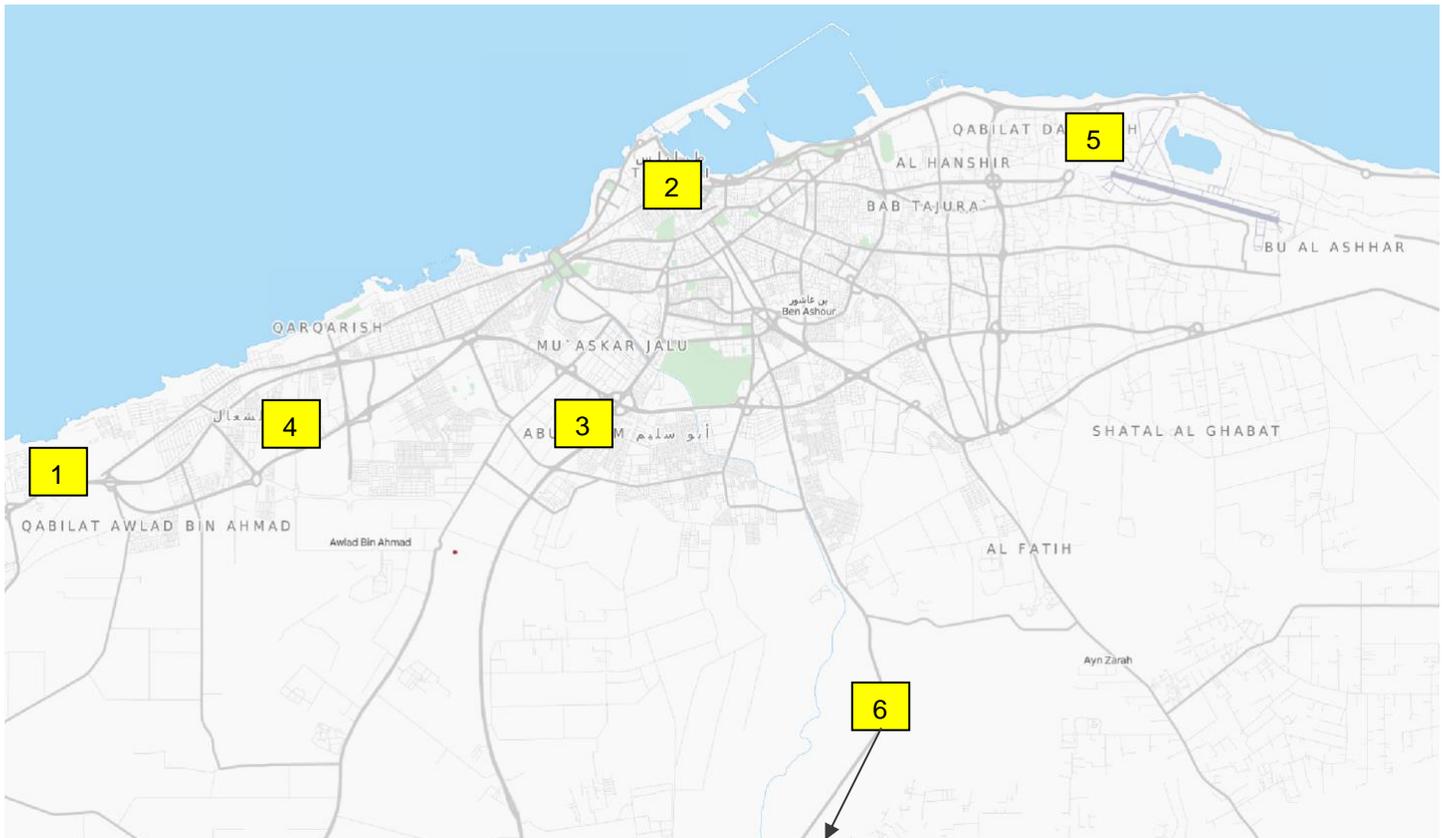
The week in Central Libya was marked by the Sirte Protection Force confirming on 22 Aug the arrest of two individuals suspected of murdering a woman and her child. Reports suggest the assailants fired at the woman's house on 20 Aug, which resulted in her death. The motive behind the incident remains unclear. There is a possibility the incident was indiscriminate though personal disputes involving relatives, neighbours, and/or friends are common across the country.

Turning to southern Libya, Whispering Bell noted a relative decrease in the number of kidnappings and other incidents, though sources suggest criminal activity remains on the rise in Sabha. Sources indicate a new smuggling route was established between Adiri and Awbari in the desert, while an unidentified aircraft was reported flying over Sabha for multiple days.

In Eastern Libya, there were no new reports of clashes in Derna. Meanwhile, local reports from 25 Aug suggest security forces arrested a criminal group involved in smuggling fuel to terrorist elements in the Municipality of Jalu.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Heavy clashes between TRB and Al-Kaniat after 301 withdrawal from T.I.A



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (18 Aug) Locals close road in protest of mistreatment at bank in Janzour
2. (18 Aug) Protest calling for return of fuel & gas crisis committee
3. (18 Aug) Protests in front of PM office & Abu Slim
4. (19 Aug) Ossoud Tajoura kidnap member of Daman militia
5. (25 Aug) Beach Rd remains closed East of Mitiga & at Sban roundabout
6. (26 Aug) TRB warns locals over potential attack by Al-Kaniat militia

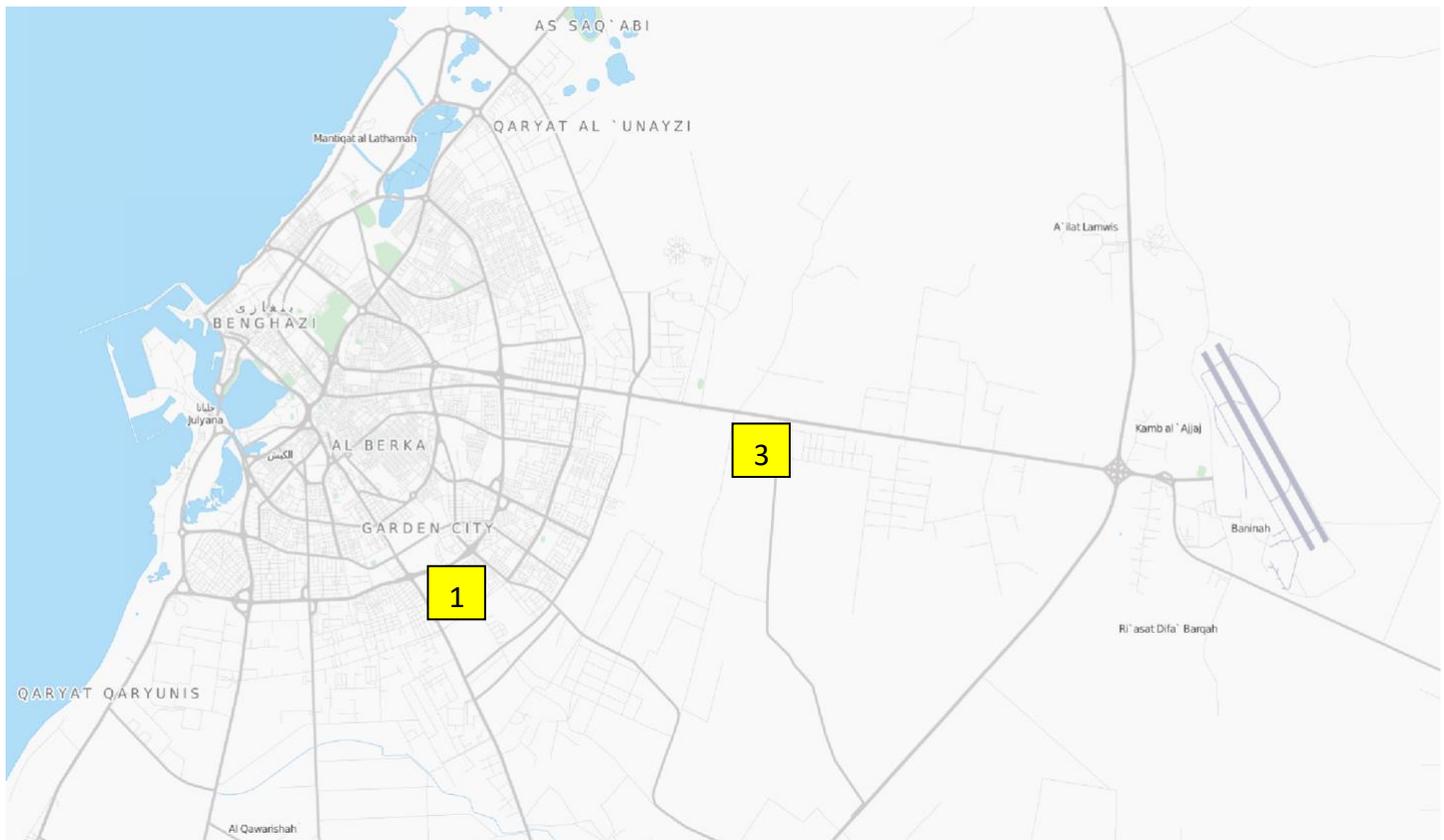
Heavy clashes in Tripoli's South

Reports suggest rockets fell on a mosque and a house on the Assedra road in the Salah Eddein area in the early hours of 27 Aug. Additionally, a military convoy of 30 vehicles affiliated with the TRB was reportedly mobilizing towards the Khela Al-Furjan area at approximately 0500hrs on 27 Aug, coinciding with reports of explosions heard in Tripoli's Wadi Al-Rabie and Tajoura areas. Initial reports indicate that TRB forces moved towards Tripoli's Qasr bin Ghashir area, where the Al-Kaniat militia is stationed. Thus far, reports suggest the clashes have resulted in three civilian casualties along with the death of two TRB members. The road towards the Khela Al-Furjan area in front of Al-Yarmouk Camp remains blocked by the TRB and Misrata's 301st Brigade as of the morning of 27 Aug, while the Qaser Bin Ghashir Roundabout was blocked by the Al-Kaniat militia, with travellers prevented from passing. Clashes erupted in Tripoli's Wadi Al-Rabie area at approximately 0845hrs on 27 Aug.

Reports suggest the Al-Kaniat militia seized the Al-Yarmouk Camp and approached the Ain Zara area. Reinforcements in support of the TRB were also reported in Tripoli's Salah Eddein, with a movement of vehicles belonging to the Nawasi militia in the area. Al-Kaniat militia seized parts of the Khallat Al-Forjan area, pushing from the South towards Salah Al-Dein and Airport Road and from the southeast towards the Wadi Al-Rabei area with heavy weapons including tanks. The latest reports suggest the Al-Kaniat militia seized the Al-Yarmouk Camp and reportedly reached the passport authority HQ in the Salah Al-Dein area. Unconfirmed reports over social media outlets suggested Al-Bugra militia was gathering forces at the Sban roundabout, East of Mitiga in the Tajoura area, though the reports were later discredited. Whispering Bell sources suggest Al-Bugra militia has not mobilized at the time of writing and aircraft at Tripoli's Mitiga Airport were not evacuated, as reported across social media.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

LNA releases GNA Deputy Interior Minister, arrives in Benghazi



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (18 Aug) Group of students arrested for criminal acts
2. (19 Aug) GNA official released after months of detention
3. (23 Aug) Armed robbery injures 2 brothers in Bu'Atni

Armed robbery injures two

Two brothers residing in Benghazi's Al-Fateh neighbourhood were reportedly injured in an armed robbery at night on 23 Aug. According to reports, the unidentified assailants identified as dark-skinned and dressed in military uniform, robbed the victims' vehicle and shot them in Benghazi's Bu'Atni area. The latest reports suggest one brother was slightly injured and left the hospital, whilst the other remained in the intensive care unit. Outlawed groups often dress in military uniform with no official affiliation to any security and/or military unit. Sporadic security incidents, including armed robberies, remain frequent across Benghazi.

GNA official released

On 18 Aug, reports suggest the Libyan National Army (LNA) released Faraj Egaim, the Deputy Interior Minister in the Government of National Accord (GNA), after months of detention in Ar Rajmah. Unconfirmed reports suggest that Egaim has been held captive by General Haftar since mid-November 2017. On 02 Jan 2018, youth from the Al-Awaqir tribe demanded the release of Egaim. In Nov 2017, tensions escalated between General Haftar and Egaim when the latter demanded Haftar's departure from Benghazi. His headquarters were subsequently attacked by pro-Haftar forces and his supporters were arrested. Egaim's release is likely a push by Haftar to contribute to his public image ahead of the planned elections. The latest reports suggest pictures of Faraj Egaim were released across social media, reportedly documenting his arrival to Benghazi.

6. What's next

Tripoli clashes to further undermine GNA political posture

POLITICAL FORECAST

The GNA suffered further setbacks as it failed to implement economic reforms and amid growing rhetoric between the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) and Fayez Serraj. According to the CBL Secretary of the Board of Directors, Fathi Akoub, the GNA failed to fulfill its agreement with the CBL and refused to implement the economic reform program “at last minute”. The CBL, however, issued a statement denying Akoub’s accusations and claiming they do not represent the bank’s official stance. The development would highlight internal discord among the CBL and is the latest in a series of controversies related to the economic reform program. Meanwhile, the head of the House of Representatives (HoR), Agila Saleh, stated a vote on the constitution referendum could be bypassed in favour of directly holding elections. It remains unclear whether Agila Saleh’s statement was in reaction to the Tripoli clashes. Beyond this, there are signs of a potential entente between France and Italy following disagreements over the elections in Libya. The French Foreign Ministry welcomed the Italian government’s call to hold an international conference on Libya, describing Italy as a key partner in efforts to stabilize the country.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for “*Lawfare*”, the authors, Rhiannon Smith and Jason Pack, highlight several technical and political gaps in the Paris agreement in its current form. “First, no agreement was reached in Paris about what the constitutional basis for these elections will be—whether it will be formalized by amending existing legislation or approving a new constitution. The HoR has decided to pursue the latter, drafting legislation for a constitutional referendum. However, the parliament was twice forced to postpone its voting sessions in late July and mid-August after they descended into chaos. Second, no administrative framework for implementing this ambitious timeline was agreed in Paris and it remains unclear how a viable referendum on legislation as important as the constitution could be held in just one month, even if there were legislation in place. Although voter registration was reopened at the start of 2018, at present only 53.26 percent of potential voters are registered, and there is no process in place yet for candidates in the subsequent elections to register. Third, despite a loose, top-down commitment to holding elections in Libya this year, the political underpinnings which would allow elections to function as a framework for reconciling socio-political struggles, rather than accentuating them, are wholly absent.” said Smith and Pack.

SECURITY FORECAST

Heavy militia clashes threaten to significantly undermine the security situation across the capital city. While clashes between the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) and Al-Kaniat have been confined to the South and southeastern parts of the capital city, there is a potential for alliances to expand clashes further North. Meanwhile, there is a possibility the recording by IS leader, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, and its circulation will lead to a rise in IS-related activity across Libya, especially given the fact this is the first recording released in almost a year. In the Oil Crescent, the LNA will likely remain on high alert and continue to conduct patrols and reconnaissance missions, especially after reports that former Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) commander Ibrahim Jathran and a coalition of militants are preparing an offensive to seize the Jufra airbase from the Sirte and Al-Jufra national districts. In the South, Chadian rebel movement Conseil de Commandement Militaire pour le Salut de la République (CCMSR) attacked yet again a military outpost in Chad’s Kouri Bougoudi on 21 Aug. CCMSR continues to operate in Libya’s South, exploiting porous borders. In the East, Benghazi, indiscriminate gunfire and criminal activity remain widespread across the city.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for “*The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*”, the authors, Katherine Pollock and Frederic Wehrey, discuss the security aspirations and socioeconomic realities at the Tunisian-Libyan border, including the widespread cross-border smuggling activities. “According to various reports, Tunisia’s informal economy accounts for between 39 and 50 percent of its GDP. And potentially more than half of the money circulating in Libya is in the informal sector. It is therefore not surprising that bilateral informal trade is significant for both countries. The World Bank estimated it to be valued around \$498 million in 2015, including approximately \$200 million for cigarettes, \$148 million for fuel, and \$150 million for other goods. While the smuggling of certain consumer goods (electronics, clothing, home appliances) decreased from 2013 to 2015, there was a dramatic increase in the smuggling of tobacco and fuel during that same period. The markets for both are estimated to be large. For example, 40 percent of the 380 million contraband cigarette packs consumed annually in Tunisia originate from Libya. Contraband fuel traded at the border accounted for 17 percent of Tunisian consumption in 2014.” said Pollock and Wehrey.

About Whispering Bell



Contact Whispering Bell at: +971-4-448-6690 or at ras@whisperingbell.com

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