



1. The Big Picture

NOC attack further undermines confidence in Tripoli security

The week was marked by a tentative halt to heavy militia clashes in Tripoli's South. Growing political rhetoric against the Government of National Accord (GNA) seemed to gradually replace skirmishes in Tripoli. However, this uneasy calm was short-lived after assailants, likely affiliated to the Islamic State (IS) attacked the National Oil Corporation HQ, undermining yet again confidence in Tripoli's security situation.

The heavy clashes that opposed a loose coalition of nominally pro-GNA militias to the Al-Kaniat militia, and other pro-General National Congress (GNC) elements, subsided South of the capital city. A ceasefire, which seemed fragile by design, was upheld, though no durable solution has been found to Tripoli's "militia problem", as described by many analysts.

More importantly, and to a certain extent, the clashes showed that the anti-GNA sentiment, and what Al-Kaniat militia claimed to stand for, is stronger and will take precedence over other domestic issues or rivalries in the medium to long term. Despite a consolidated pro-GNA front that succeeded in repelling Al-Kaniat's push further North, the clashes have underlined the fact that arrangements bringing together Tripoli's militias seem to be gradually eroding at a time when all types of coalitions are possible and plausible.

Politically, whatever the outcomes, the GNA needs to portray an image of change as soon as possible, with enough assurances that a process is underway to reorganize the security landscape in the capital city. Al-Kaniat is unlikely to retreat due to a fear of backlash. In addition, while the situation in Tripoli would enable Haftar to gain allies and consolidate somewhat of an influence in the capital city, a full-scale military intervention is unlikely in the short-term as it would undermine the LNA's public image and efforts to gain political credit ahead, despite hints at such an outcome. However, a scenario where Tripoli's security situation deteriorates further in Tripoli and/or

elections' outcome, if held, is unfavourable to factions in the East, would raise the likelihood of such a military intervention.

In a clear sign of the prevailing security vacuum in Tripoli following clashes, reports indicated explosions and gunfire inside the headquarters of the NOC on Tripoli's Sikka Road at approximately 0850hrs on 10 Sep. Initial reports at the time of writing suggested approximately six unidentified gunmen dressed in civilian uniforms entered the building and opened fire whilst detonating person-borne improvised explosive devices (PBIED), previously believed to be grenade explosions. Thus far, the attack has reportedly resulted in 2 fatalities, NOC employees, and at least 10 injuries.

Overall, Islamic State (IS) involvement, though unconfirmed at the time of writing, is likely given the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) used. If confirmed, this would represent the second IS complex in less than six months. The attack will likely speed up efforts to disrupt the status quo, especially following strong statements, and a more direct approach by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), reportedly to advocate an "alternative" process as plan B, beyond Ghassan Salame's Action Plan.

The attack will further undermine confidence in Tripoli's security situation and likelihood of elections by Dec 2018. The attack closely follows the outbreak of heavy militia clashes on 26 Aug, the GNA PM Fayez Al-Serraj's decision to appoint himself as Defence Minister, and more recently the NOC announcing its highest forecast annual revenues since 2013.

KEY POINTS

- LNA hints at Tripoli intervention
- NOC attack: IS involvement likely
- Pressure on GNA to alter status quo



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2. National Security Map


LNA-manned CP closed along Kufra-Jalu Rd due to surge in kidnappings; 13 abducted

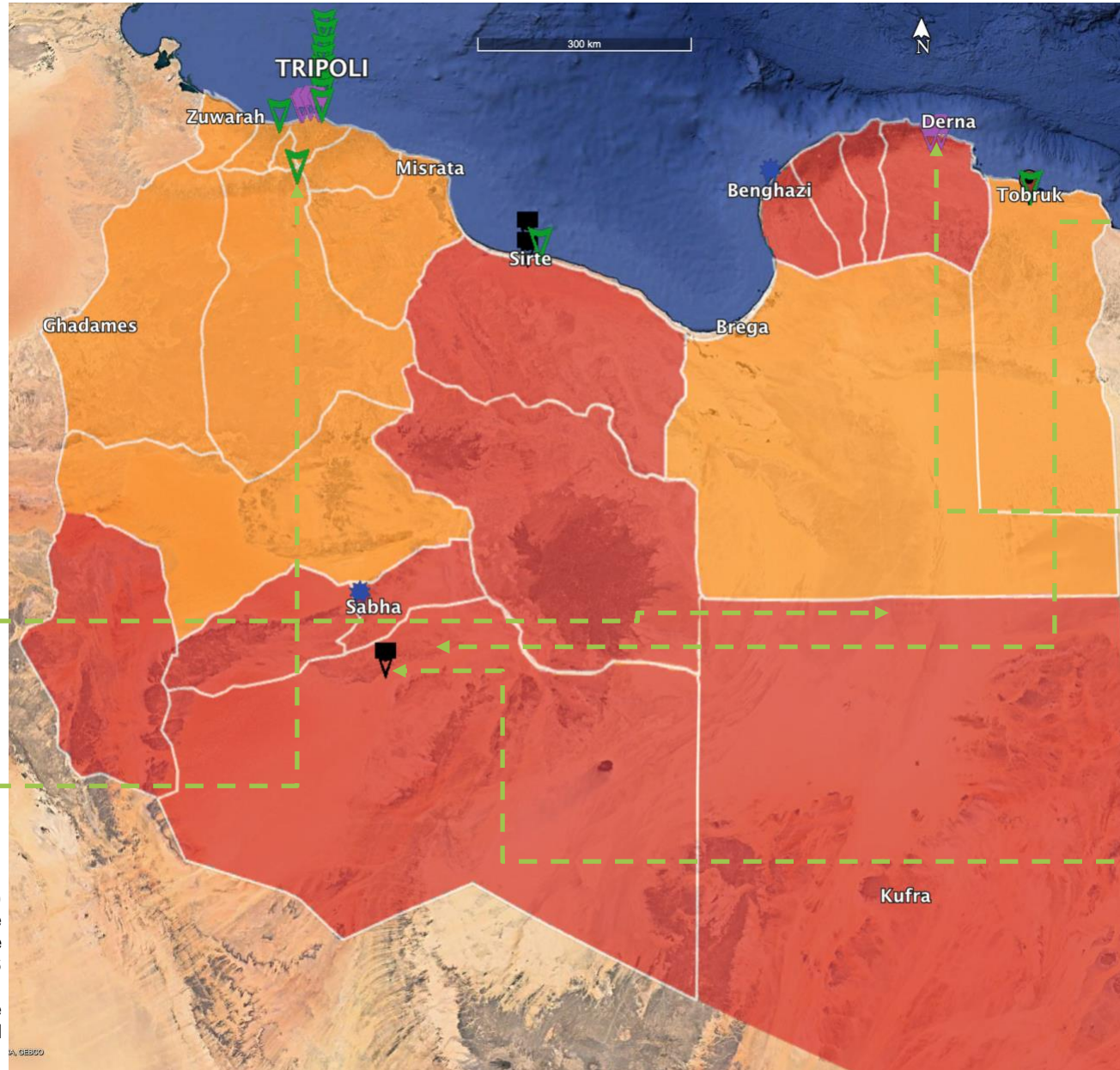
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



On 08 Sep, the General Command of the Libyan National Army (LNA) issued a decision to form a “Southern Operations Group” headed by the Al-Saiqa Special Forces Commander, Wanis Boukhmada, to control and maintain security in Libya’s Southwestern region. Focusing on smuggling and other illicit activity would enable Haftar to gain political credit. The mobilization, however, could create a security vacuum in other areas currently under the LNA’s control, including the Oil Crescent.

Clashes between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and foreign militants intensified resulting in the death of two LNA forces and the injury of 4 others in Derna’s Old City on 02 Sep. The LNA reportedly targeted militants at a distance of 300 meters whilst operating with caution due to the presence of snipers on roofs of buildings and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted by militants across the city.

Clashes reportedly erupted between Tebu tribesmen and Darfur rebel groups fueled by a series of robberies and killings committed by the Sudanese rebels in the Umm Al-Aranib area on 02 Sep. A commander of the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) mercenaries, Izz Al-Din Laga, was killed in the clashes.

Reports suggest the only in-and-out Northern checkpoint in Kufra operated by the Libyan National Army’s (LNA) Subol Al-Salam brigade was closed following the abduction of 13 civilians on the Kufra-Jalu Road.

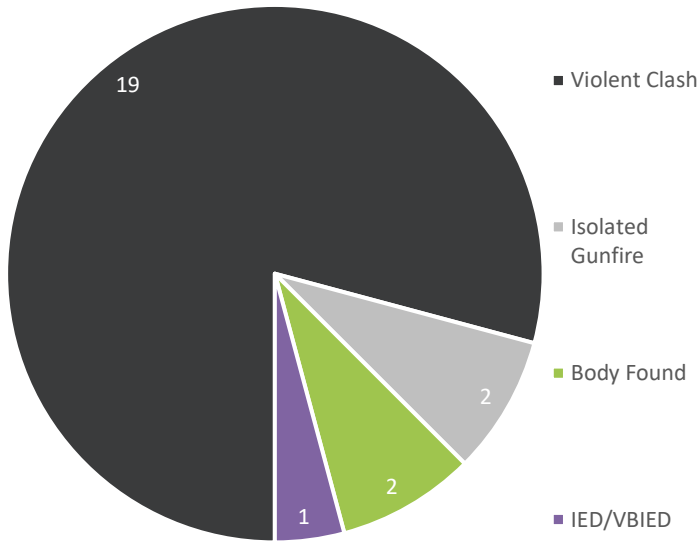
A local militia reportedly assaulted a member of the House of Representatives (HoR) in Gharyan on 05 Sep. Reports suggest the Al-Kayakh militia is responsible.

The National Oil Corporation (NOC) declared it is on track to record the highest annual revenues since 2013. The NOC stated revenues reached 13.6 billion USD from Jan to Jul 2018, which exceeds figures recorded in 2017. The NOC estimates its revenues by the end of 2018 will reach 23.4 billion USD.

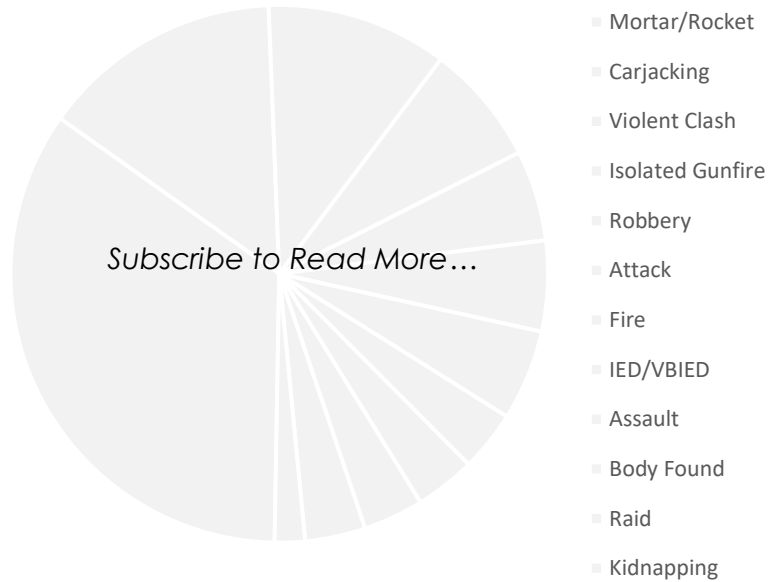
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Nationwide fatalities numbers decrease due to tentative ceasefire in Tripoli

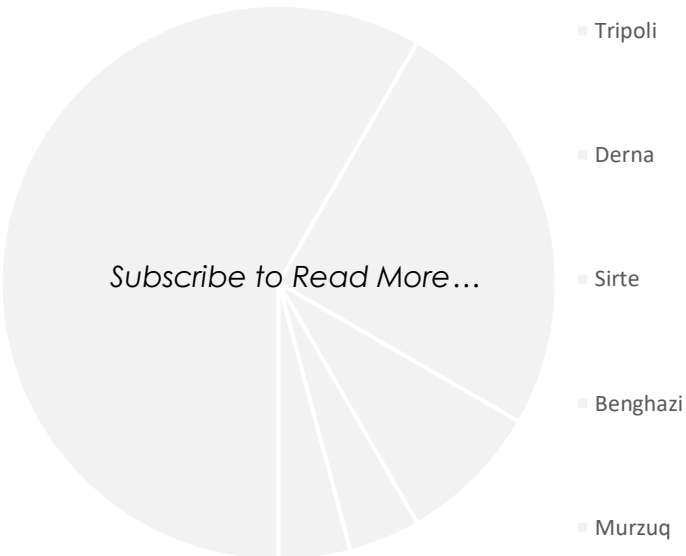
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



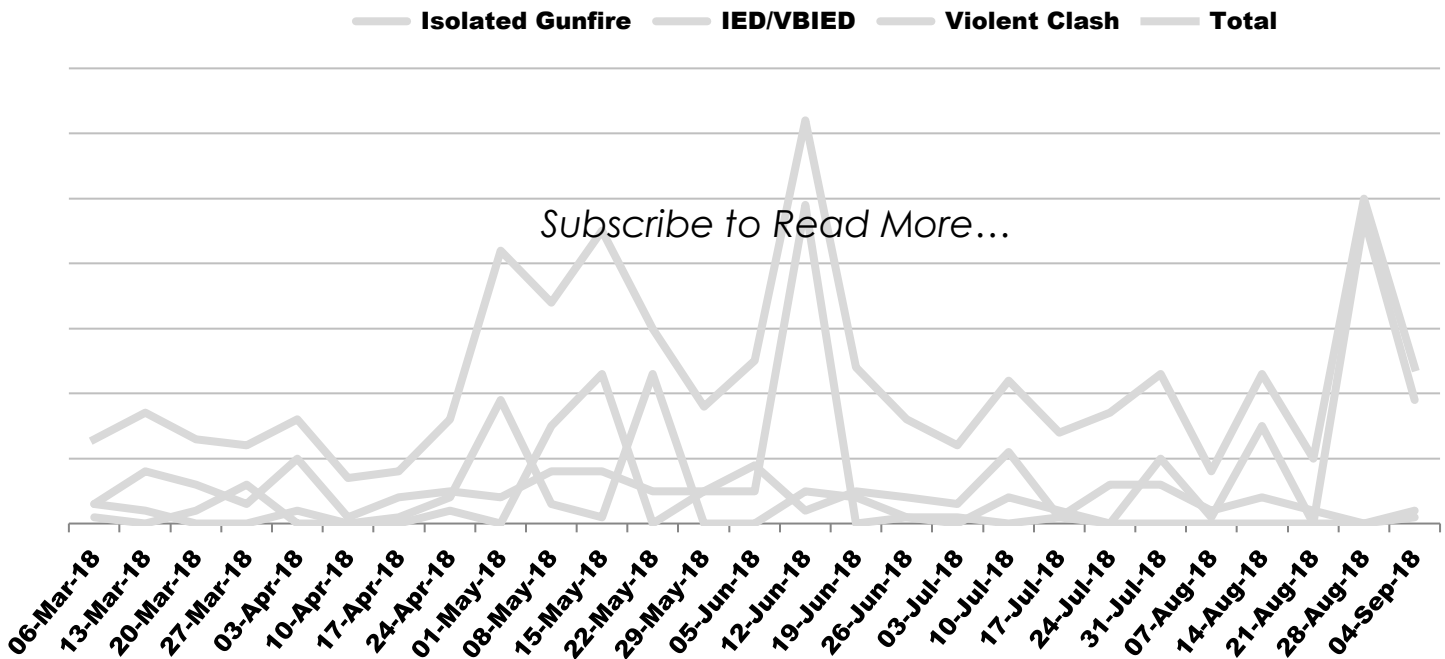
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 24 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 50 deaths reported last week and 10 the week before. The number of fatalities from Tripoli's violent clashes decreased relatively compared with the previous week as the ceasefire agreement was upheld. However, indiscriminate shelling continued across the capital city while carjackings were on the rise due to the prevailing security vacuum. More than 75% of nationwide security incidents were recorded in the Tripoli national district. Fatalities from the latest attack targeting the NOC building will be accounted for in next week's report. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 4 cases of isolated gunfire, 6 episodes of violent clash, 1 kidnapping, 2 IED/VBIED incidents, airstrike, 1 robbery, and a mortar/rocket incident.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 46 incidents, including 44 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell recorded in Tripoli a surge in carjackings. Two unidentified armed assailants on foot carjacked a white Kia Cerato vehicle on Beer Osta Milad Rd on 07 Sep. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, two unidentified assailants riding a silver Kia Cerato vehicle carjacked a Kia Rio vehicle in Tripoli's Hai Al-Andalus area, near the Al-Andalous Post Office at approximately 1200hrs on 07 Sep. Recent clashes have resulted in a security vacuum across the capital city. Meanwhile, there were reports of sporadic gunfire in Tripoli's Al Bivi area near the Alnajma Factory, at approximately 0730hrs on 07 Sep. Meanwhile, some roads remain blocked by dirt barricades in Janzur, Bawabat Al-Jebs, and at the Salah Eddien Traffic Light. Ghneiwa militia blocked the Wali Al-Aahd Street, near the airport road, with dirt barricades at approximately 1830hrs on 06 Sep, with reports of 2 anti-aircraft vehicles stationed in the area. In a clear sign that militia tensions prevail, a video was circulated on 07 Sep on social media, showing Salah Badi with a group of gunmen at the Brega Bridge at night, where he refuted Ghneiwa militia's claims it controlled the area, threatening of further military action to "free" Tripoli from militias.

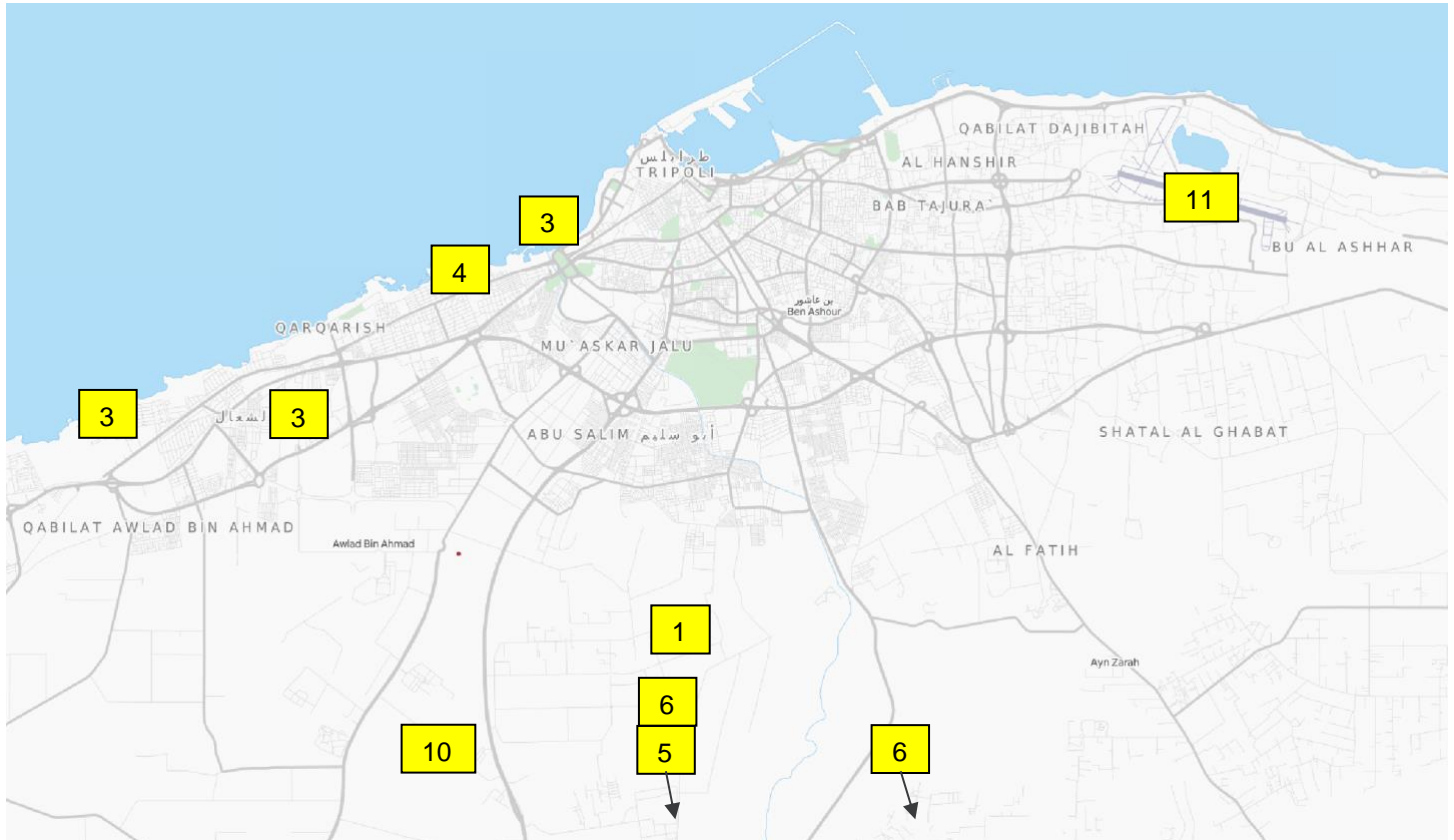
The week in Central Libya was marked by local reports suggest of man shot in the head and abdomen as a result of a verbal altercation with a gunman in the evening on 05 Sep. Reports suggest the victim was intoxicated. Meanwhile, reports suggest a man was killed in Sirte at approximately 0130hrs on 05 Sep. Initial unconfirmed reports suggested Al-Bunyan Marsous (BAM) forces were responsible for the killing.

Turning to southern Libya, clashes erupted between Tebu tribesmen and Darfur rebel groups fueled by a series of robberies and killings committed by the Sudanese rebels in Sabha's Umm Al-Aranib area on 02 Sep.

In Eastern Libya, there were no new reports of clashes between Derna Protection Force (DPF) militants and the LNA, though unconfirmed reports indicate skirmishes in the Old City resulted in the death of a prominent DPF militant.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Clashes come to tentative halt following ceasefire; Mitiga Airport reopens



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (01 Sep) Heavy clashes between Al-Kaniat & Ghneiwa militias
2. (01-02 Sep) Heavy clashes & indiscriminate shelling continues
3. (02 Sep) Series of carjackings across Tripoli
4. (02 Sep) Sudanese Ambassador attacked in shop in Hai Al-Andalus
5. (02-03 Sep) Clashes continue, Al-Kaniat advance partially delayed
6. (03-04 Sep) Clashes continue, pro-GNA militias consolidate front
7. (04 Sep) UNSMIL supervise ceasefire between rival factions
8. (04-05 Sep) Small-scale clashes and skirmishes across city
9. (05 Sep) Fire at former US Embassy HQ
10. (06- 08 Sep) Tentative calm across Tripoli
11. (07 Sep) Air traffic resumes at Mitiga Intl Airport following closure

2nd UNSMIL meeting; tentative calm

The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and its head Ghassan Salame supervised ceasefire negotiations in the presence of multiple officials and dignitaries Al-Zawiya on 04 Sep. A tentative ceasefire was agreed upon, though local reports indicate some explosions and small-scale sporadic clashes across the capital city between 04 Sep and 05 Sep. There was an uneasy calm in the morning on 05 Sep. Despite Al-Kaniat militia's reported approval of the ceasefire, tensions and clashes could resume with little to no warning. The ceasefire agreement will do little to prevent militiamen from engaging in further hostilities, as demonstrated by the rise in carjackings across Tripoli. Meanwhile, a second meeting was held in Al-Zawiya on 08 Sep under the auspices of the UNSMIL and rival factions involved militia clashes of 26 Aug. During the meeting, parties agreed to halt their forces movements' and maintain the ceasefire declaration,

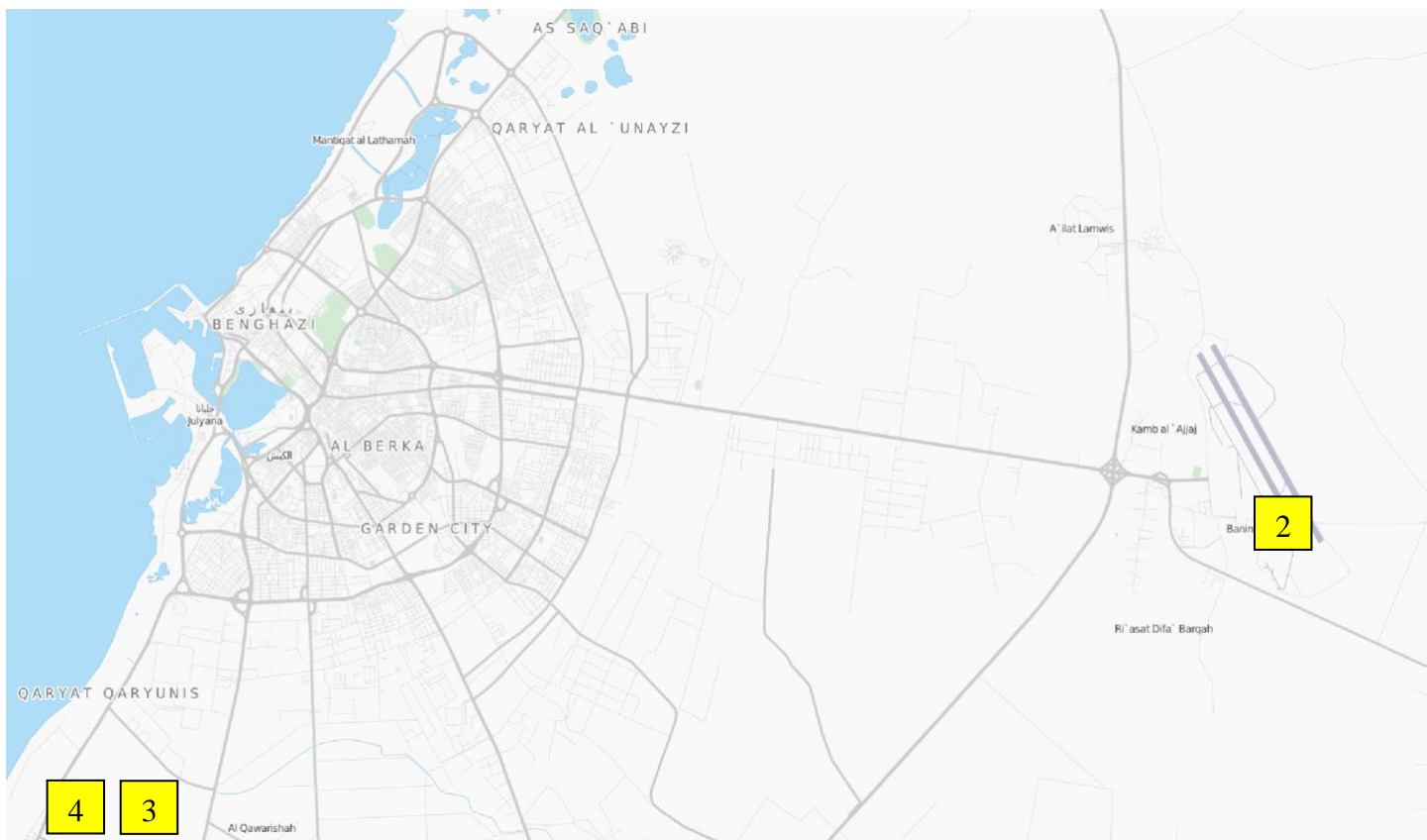
whilst implementing a monitoring and verification mechanism to consolidate the ceasefire and develop a plan to withdraw armed groups from sovereign locations and critical infrastructure sites across Tripoli. Additional reports suggest a third UNSMIL-endorsed meeting is scheduled between rival factions next week. Despite assurances given by factions during the meeting, clashes could resume with little to no warning. There is a possibility that militias are exploiting the ceasefire agreements to restructure and prepare future offensives and operations.

GNA grants Sarraj MoD position

The GNA PM Fayez Sarraj issued a decree granting himself the position of GNA Defence Minister on 06 Sep. On 29 Jul, the GNA officially dismissed former Defence Minister Mahdi Al-Barghathi after suspending him in May 2017 over the Brak Shatti massacre and on charges of facilitating multiple extra-judicial killings. Although unconfirmed, there is a possibility the decree is related to the recent heavy clashes involving the Al-Kaniat militia, which claims it derives its legitimacy from the GNA and/or an attempt to reshuffle all militias nominally under the GNA.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

IED explosions result in fatalities; 8 LNA wounded soldiers treated abroad



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (Aug) Indiscriminate gunfire results in 5 civilian injuries
2. (06 Sep) Wounded LNA forces sent abroad for treatment
3. (08 Sep) IED explosion kills man in Bousnaib
4. (08 Sep) IED explosions kills boy in Qanfouda

IED explosions

An improvised explosive device (IED) reportedly detonated resulting in the death of a man in Benghazi's Bousnaib area on 08 Sep. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, reports suggest an IED explosion resulted in the death of a 13-year-old boy in Benghazi's Qanfouda area on 08 Sep. According to the head of the information office at the Al-Jalaa Hospital for Surgery and Accidents, the boy was killed by a shrapnel throughout his body. Whilst IEDs continue to pose a threat to civilian lives across the city, recent reports suggest the numbers of casualties related to IED explosions are relatively lower than previous months.

Indiscriminate gunfire

According to an official at the Al-Jalaa Hospital for Surgery and Accidents, indiscriminate gunfire resulted in five civilian injuries across Benghazi during the month of August 2018. Benghazi, like many other Libyan cities,

continues to suffer from the proliferation of weapons across the city, which successive governments have failed to collect since the outbreak of the 2011 uprising against the Gaddafi regime.

Wounded soldiers treated abroad

Local reports from 06 Sep suggest the Libyan National Army (LNA) sent 8 armed forces personnel for treatment abroad. According to reports, a flight departed from Benina International Airport due to arrive in Ukraine with the wounded on 06 Sep. The issue of wounded soldiers remains a source of tension within the LNA. Wounded LNA soldiers commonly hold protests and resort to blocking roads across Benghazi in an attempt for their medical and financial demands to be met.

6. What's next

Further pressure on GNA to disband and/or alter Tripoli status-quo

POLITICAL FORECAST

Internationally, France and Italy's conflicting interests over Libyan affairs continue to stand as an obstacle in a country already experiencing deep-rooted domestic fragmentation. Italy's Defence Minister, Elisabetta Trenta, stated that France is partly to blame for Libya's crisis, noting its interference in the 2011 uprisings. Meanwhile, in response to circulated rumours, Trenta along with Italy's Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini, ruled out military intervention in Libya. Domestically, the House of Representatives (HoR) yet again cancelled its session to vote on the constitution referendum law on 03 Sep due to the absence of Western deputies. The HoR issued a statement calling on all military and political factions to speed up and support the holding of elections, whilst noting their will to find a constitutional basis for holding elections in agreement with the High Council of State (HCS). Moreover, in a strong statement, Haftar warned over elections failing to achieve transparency, noting that his army would nullify the results. Beyond, in a briefing to the UNSC, Ghassan Salame, called out existing institutions and warned over potential alternative means to achieve political change in Libya, in a clear sign the status quo cannot be maintained, and a new security and political landscape may be emerging.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "*Stratfor*", the author, highlights how Italy and France's conflicting goals and stances on Libya remain a hurdle in ending the country's conflict. "Paris and Rome back opposite sides in the conflict, and they have two very different views on what should happen next. After bringing together Libya's main players for a conference in May, Paris persuaded the various factions to hold elections on Dec. 10. Rome, in contrast, has no wish for any elections this year and is planning to hold its own conference on the future of Libya in October. The divergence stems in part from the countries' different goals and areas of interest in Libya, and as long as Paris and Rome offer alternative paths for mediation of the North African conflict, the prospects for success appear bleak. Amid chaos throughout Libya, the country's government split into two competing administrations in 2014, one in the west in Tripoli and the other in the east in Tobruk. At the time, domestic crises distracted France and Italy from Libyan affairs, but the two European countries have begun re-engaging with their southern neighbor over the past two years. In Paris, President Emmanuel Macron has sought to reinvigorate France's ties with Africa and play a greater role in the Middle East, while in Rome, the migrant issue has become a key defining political theme, leading to the rise of far-right parties such as the League. The competition between the Mediterranean powers remains fierce, because neither Italy nor France wishes to relinquish its influence or abandon its objectives — some of which are not always mutually compatible.

SECURITY FORECAST

The uneasy calm facilitated by a ceasefire agreement to halt clashes was short-lived after assailants attacked the NOC building in Tripoli. The attack significantly undermines confidence in Tripoli's security situation, especially if IS involvement is confirmed. Meanwhile, a second UNSMIL meeting was held in Al-Zawiya on 09 Sep, in which rival factions agreed to halt their forces' movements, whilst the mission will identify a mechanism to consolidate the ceasefire and develop a plan to withdraw militias from sovereign locations. Given the outcomes of the meeting are yet to be implemented on the ground, tensions could resume with little to no warning. In the wider West, the Ras Ajdir border crossing remains subject to brief closures due to system glitches and protests on the Tunisian side. In Libya's South, the LNA formed the "Southern Operations Group" headed by the commander of the Al-Saiqa Special Forces, Wanis Boukhmada to control and maintain security. Given the LNA's ongoing operations targeting pockets of militants in Derna, along with an increased presence in the Oil Crescent, a deployment to the South could create a security vacuum in areas currently under LNA control. In Benghazi, the security situation remains relatively stable.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for "*The New York Times*", the authors, Declan Walsh and Suliman Ali Zway, discuss how Facebook plays a key role in Libyan politics and in the lives of Libyans, as they highlight their "*battle on the streets and on the screens.*" "Armed groups use Facebook to find opponents and critics, some of whom have later been detained, killed or forced into exile, according to human rights groups and Libyan activists. Swaggering commanders boast of their battlefield exploits and fancy vacations, or rally supporters by sowing division and ethnic hatred. Forged documents circulate widely, often with the goal of undermining Libya's few surviving national institutions, notably its Central Bank. The New York Times found evidence of military-grade weapons being openly traded, despite the company's policies forbidding such commerce. Human traffickers advertise their success in helping illegal migrants reach Europe by sea, and use their pages to drum up more business. Practically every armed group in Libya, and even some of their detention centers, have their own Facebook page. "The most dangerous, dirty war is now being waged on social media and some other media platforms," Mahmud Shammam, a former information minister, said last week as fighting ripped through the Tripoli suburbs. "Lying, falsifying, misleading and mixing facts. Electronic armies are owned by everyone, and used by everyone without exception. It is the most deadly war." said Walsh and Zway.

About Whispering Bell



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

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