



1. The Big Picture

GNA reforms amid tensions; dim Paris roadmap prospects

While multiple political and economic reforms were announced over the reporting period, it remains unclear whether these political manoeuvres, by the Government of National Accord (GNA) will be sufficient to appease Tripoli tensions amid protests and growing hints at a potential resumption of clashes.

The GNA initially began with long-awaited economic reforms, which include a tax levy on foreign currency, a 500 USD increase in the annual family allowance, and some restrictions related to letters of credit (LCs). Then, on 16 Sep, the GNA followed with significant decrees on the security front, including the formation of a police force in Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport, which is expected to reopen by latest 20 Sep. Contrary to reports, the GNA decree does not translate as an attempt to oust the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) and will possibly have little to no impact on the ground. The SDF is expected to retain control of the Mitiga military base, though other outcome(s) would remain plausible.

Overall, the speed with which these reforms were executed would highlight a potential "quick fix" attempt by the GNA with no clear strategy or follow-through. However, the reforms could be a stepping stone towards a new security landscape and order in the capital city. The decrees could be part of initial steps to dissolve militias in the capital city. The GNA's success in achieving such an outcome would remain difficult to ascertain.

Meanwhile, as the GNA attempts to consolidate the ceasefire, the capital city braces for further clashes. Rival groups, including Tripoli's main militias could break the ceasefire with little to no warning. In an alternative and best-case scenario, the UN and UN Special Mission in Libya's

(UNSMIL) stronger and more direct approach could tentatively contain any military escalation in the short-term and pave the way for a consolidated ceasefire agreement.

Regardless, the GNA would need to tread carefully as the Al-Kaniat militia could perceive the recent reforms as a form of capitulation, prompting the militia to increase its calls for political representation. There appears to be a race among militias vying for political recognition and a stake in Tripoli's future security landscape. It remains to be seen whether Tripoli's main militias will accept a situation in which Al-Kaniat secures Tripoli International Airport and other areas in the South, and more importantly, receives funding from the GNA. The issue is no longer exclusively focused on Al-Kaniat, but what the militia claimed it stood against in its attempt to alter the balance of power in Tripoli.

Politically, prospects for the Paris election roadmap diminished after the House of Representatives (HoR) failed to meet the 16 Sep deadline to form a constitutional basis for elections. A focus on municipal/parliamentary elections, prior to a presidential race, is expected and would prolong the GNA's mandate. The municipal elections in Darj and Bani Walid this week could provide a glimpse of the upcoming political path. This would place greater emphasis on the planned Italy-led conference in Nov, which many analysts believe will either complement and/or discredit the Paris election road-map.

KEY POINTS

- GNA reform implementation unclear
- Clashes could resume in Tripoli
- Paris election roadmap is fading



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2. National Security Map

UNSC imposes sanctions on former head of PFG Ibrahim Jathran; asset freeze & travel ban

Key

THREAT INDICATORS

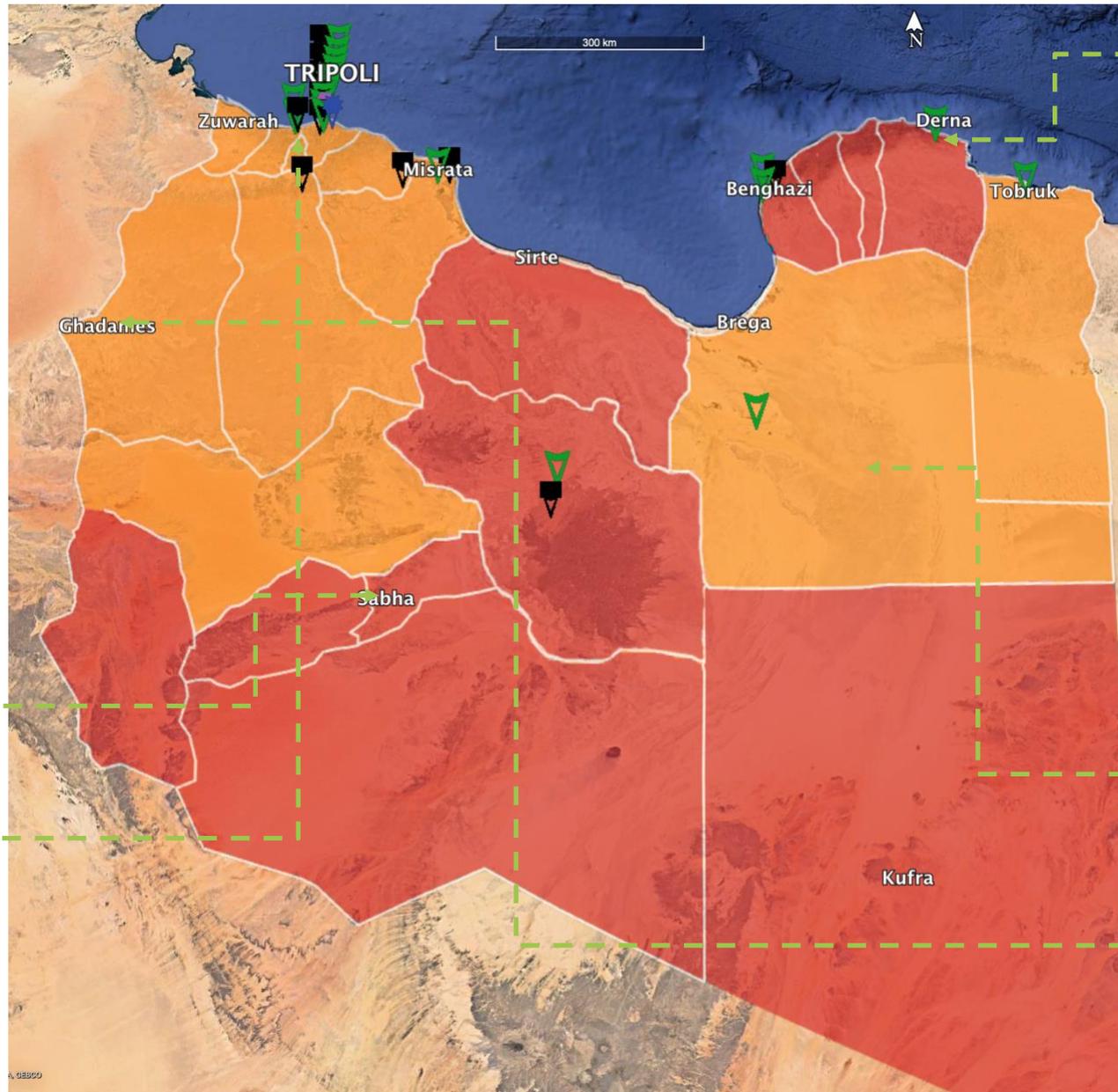
- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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

Sabha's tribal leaders allegedly agreed on the formation of a new government "Federal Government of Fezzan" in Libya's South. This was reported as a secessionist move from Tripoli, though a senior figure from Sabha later discredited the development. The formation of the government remains unconfirmed.

On 15 Sep, a meeting was held in Tarhuna in the attendance of tribal chiefs from multiple Libyan cities in which a 3-day deadline was given to the Government of National Accord (GNA) to disband Tripoli's militias. The Libyan tribal chiefs also called for the formation of a joint force consisting of forces from all of Libya's regions to replace the militias controlling the capital city.



Reports suggest an improvised explosive device (IED) placed under a 106 Infantry Brigade vehicle exploded, resulting in the death of one soldier and injuring three others in Derna's Al-Fattaih area on 15 Sep.

On 13 Sep, a technical military meeting was held between the UNSMIL and military commanders in the West, resulting in the agreement to establish a joint disengagement and de-confliction force. The forces' objectives, tasks and structure aim to consolidate ceasefire and stabilize security in conflict areas across Tripoli.

On 12 Sep, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in coordination with the US imposed sanctions on the Libyan militia leader Ibrahim Jathran, former head of Petroleum Facilities Guards (PFG) for carrying out armed attacks against oil installations located in the oil Crescent Region.

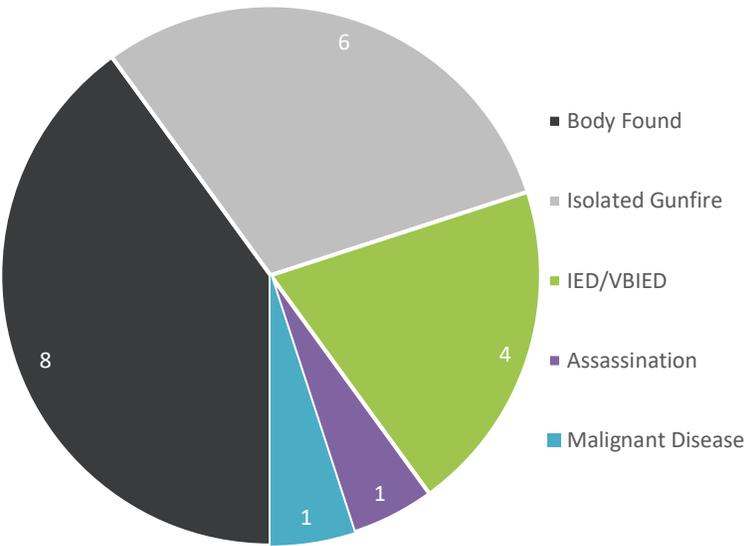
Local reports suggest the security services at the Awjila police station captured four men of Chadian nationality accused of murder on 14 Sep.

Local reports suggest an unidentified armed group attacked and looted the polling station in the Al-Shorouq electoral centre in the Municipality of Dari, resulting in the assault of an employee in the evening on 15 Sep.

3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Nationwide fatalities numbers decrease; surge in isolated gunfire incidents

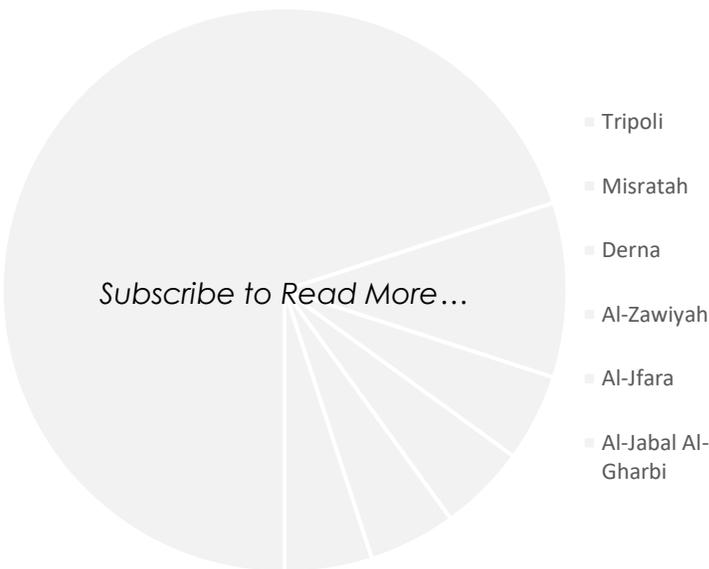
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



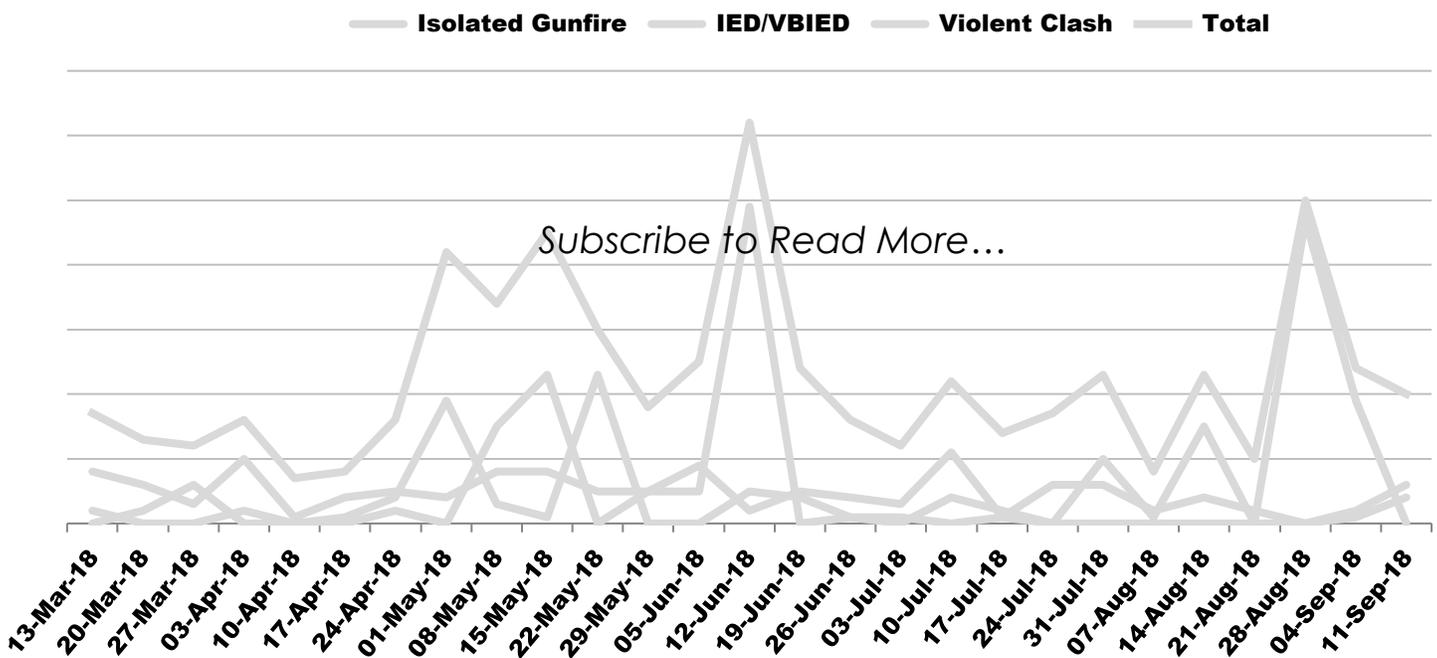
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 20 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 24 deaths reported last week and 50 the week before. The Islamic State (IS) complex attack on the National Oil Corporation (NOC) headquarters was part of this week's reporting period, with 4 fatalities and 10 injuries recorded. This week, while Tripoli's clashes subsided and there were no fatalities from violent clashes, Whispering Bell recorded a surge in isolated gunfire incidents and fatalities. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 12 cases of isolated gunfire, 6 mortar/rocket incidents, 6 carjackings, a total of 4 bodies found, 4 fire incidents, and 3 protests.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 35 incidents, including 29 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. This week was marked by the IS complex attack on the NOC HQ. On 11 Sep, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the National Oil Corporation (NOC) complex attack in Tripoli on 10 Sep via their official channel. IS stated the attack targeted the "economic interests of oppressing governments funding crusaders". On 10 Sep at approximately 0900hrs, three "dark-skinned" IS militants, wearing personal-borne improvised explosive device vests (PBIEDs) attacked the NOC's HQ resulting in 4 fatalities and 10 injuries based on the latest statistics. The attackers opened fire and reportedly detonated grenades inside the building, whilst holding some NOC personnel hostage. Meanwhile, reports suggest unidentified gunmen opened fire on General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) engineers and technicians completing maintenance of electrical cables in Tripoli's Al-Hadba Al-Mashrou area at approximately 1800hrs on 11 Sep. There were no further security incidents reported. The incident follows an assault on GECOL's Executive Manager on 10 Sep.

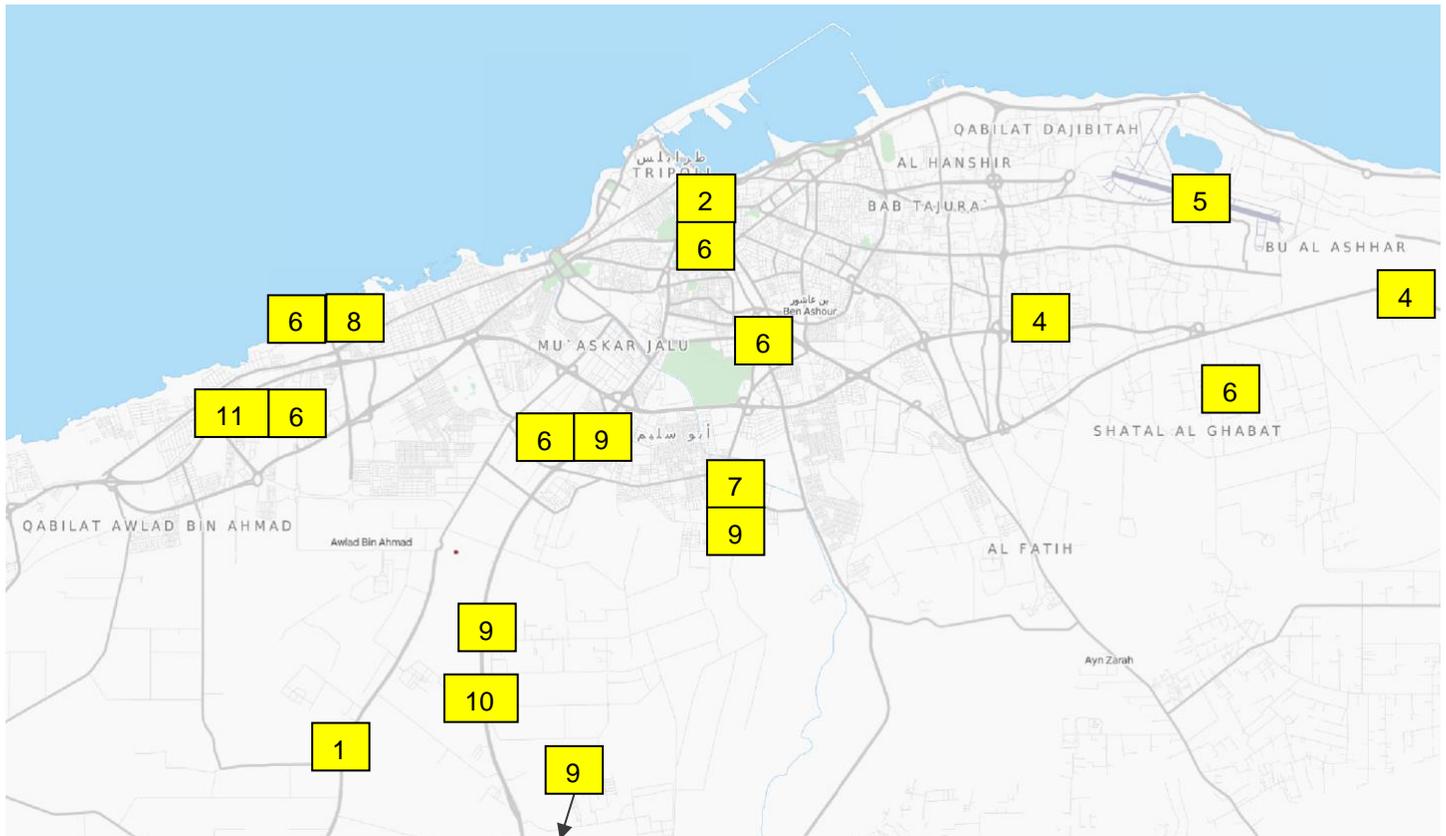
The week in Central Libya was marked by reports suggesting the Al-Hassouna water site was exposed to indiscriminate gunfire by unidentified assailants on 11 Sep. The operation and maintenance teams were reportedly exposed to the gunfire though no further security incidents were reported. Reports suggest the team fled, whilst a power transformer was damaged.

Turning to Libya's South, Chadian rebels reportedly kidnapped a family of four near Jufra. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of 2 million LYD in exchange for their release.

In Libya's East, cases of indiscriminate gunfire persisted across Benghazi, while an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion killed 1 and injured 3 other Libyan National Army (LNA) forces in Derna on 11 Sep.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Tensions remain; shells land near Mitiga airport resulting in closure



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (09 Sep) NMC halt operations following raid in Swani
2. (10 Sep) IS attack on NOC HQ, 4 fatalities & 10 injuries
3. (10 Sep) GECOL Executive Manager assaulted
4. (10 Sep) Sounds of explosions in Tajoura & Souq Al-Jumaa
5. (11 Sep) Shelling of Mitiga Intl Airport, airport closes
6. (10 – 12 Sep) Series of carjackings across Tripoli
7. (11 Sep) Gunmen open fire on GECOL staff
8. (11 Sep) SDF assassinate narcotics dealer in Gergarish
9. (12 Sep) Clash between Badi & Ghneiwa; shelling across city
10. (13 Sep) Body found inside vehicle on Airport Road
11. (15 Sep) Raid on Ghut Shaal Police station to free criminals

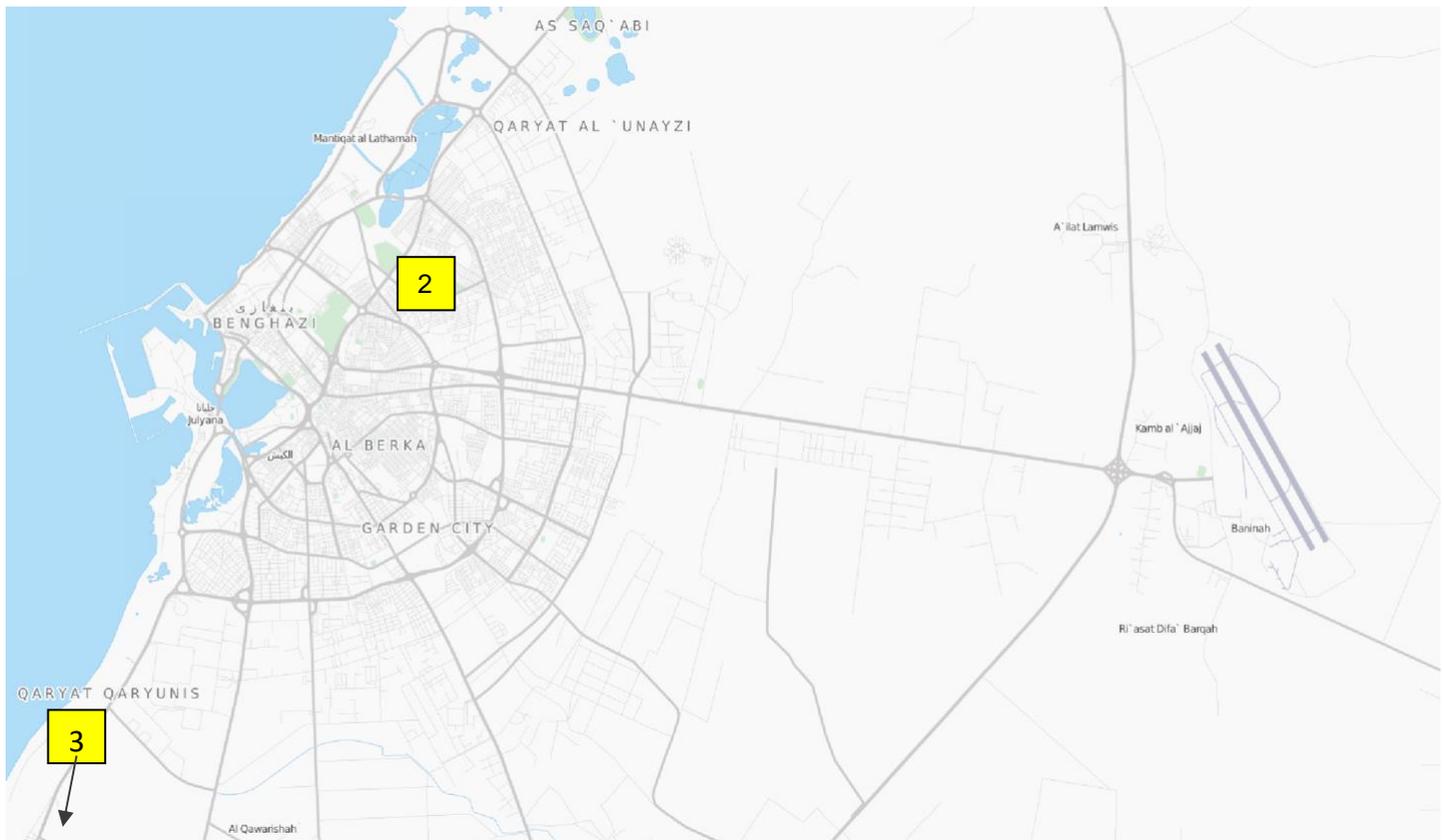
Shells land near Mitiga; sporadic gunfire

Reports emerged over shells landing on Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport vicinity at approximately 1200hrs on 11 Sep. A shell reportedly fell on the airport, resulting in the outbreak of a fire, whilst two shells reportedly fell on the sea front, and two additional shells on Tripoli's Shurfat Al Malāha area behind the airport. Subsequently, all flights to/from Mitiga International Airport were diverted to Misrata's International Airport on 11 Sep. Additionally, all aircraft were transferred to Misrata's International Airport as a precautionary measure at approximately 0200hrs on 12 Sep. Meanwhile, reports suggest clashes erupted between forces affiliated to Salah Badi and the Ghneiwa militia with sounds of heavy gunfire and explosions heard on Tripoli's Airport Road, Wali Al-Ahd Street, Brega Bridge, and Al-Hadba Al-Mashrou near the Al-Fahm Roundabout at approximately 0000hrs on 12 Sep. A series of shells reportedly fell on Tripoli's Abu Salim, Al-Hadba Al-Mashrou and Brega Oil Company areas. Sounds of gunfire were also heard in Tripoli's Tajoura area at approximately 0000hrs on 12 Sep, whilst a tank was reportedly witnessed moving near the Sidi Al-Masrey Roundabout at approximately

0000hrs on 12 Sep. Moreover, in a press conference, following a meeting between the Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Ghassan Salame, the Head of the Presidential Council (PC) Fayez Serraj, and Western military commanders discussing the security arrangements in Tripoli, Salame threatened to reveal the names behind the targeting of Mitiga International airport on 11 Sep. Following the resumption of clashes, Tripoli witnessed an uneasy calm on 12 Sep, as no further clashes were reported in the capital city. Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport closed as of 16 Sep, though the latest reports indicate a reopening by latest 20 Sep. Tensions could escalate between rival factions with little to no warning. The Municipality of Hai Al-Andalus' statement regarding a 5-day deadline for armed groups to depart the capital coincides with a similar 3-day deadline by Libyan tribal chiefs for the disbandment of Tripoli's militias. The calls for the disbandment of the capital's militias are growing, suggesting the current status quo can not be maintained and a new security landscape may alternatively emerge.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Haftar issues decree forming new “73rd Infantry Brigade” in Benghazi



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (11 Sep) Haftar establishes “73rd Infantry Battalion”
2. (12 Sep) Indiscriminate gunfire injures man on Sourya street
3. (15 Sep) Multiple shells dismantled in local farmhouse

73rd Infantry Brigade established

On 11 Sep, the head of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Khalifa Haftar, issued a decree establishing the “73rd Infantry Brigade” under the General Command of the armed forces stationed in Benghazi. In the decree No. 262, the brigade will include 6 battalions consisting of the 153th Infantry Regiment, 303th Marjah Regiment, 276th Infantry Regiment of Benghazi, 165th Infantry Regiment, 120 Special Operations Battalion in Benghazi and the 289 Benghazi tanks. Haftar’s decision to establish a newly-formed brigade in Benghazi could be perceived as a move to compensate for LNA forces deployed in other parts of the country, including Derna, the Oil Crescent and most recently in the South following the formation of the Bukhmada-led “Southern Operations Group”. The deployment of LNA forces across multiple fronts could result in a potential security vacuum in Benghazi, which likely prompted Haftar to increase the number of brigades

across the city. The LNA’s mobilization in the South, if successful, would enable Haftar to isolate Tripoli as the remaining source of instability in Libya, enabling the general to consolidate power and influence via territorial expansion.

Shells & Indiscriminate Gunfire

According to the Mine and War Remnants Foundation, multiple shells were located and subsequently dismantled at a local’s farm house in Benghazi’s Al-Hallis area. The team received reports of suspicious “unidentified objects” in several areas where previous clashes took place between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and terrorist elements across the city. Meanwhile, reports suggest indiscriminate gunfire resulted in the injury of a man in front of his house on Benghazi’s Sourya Street on 12 Sep. Indiscriminate gunfire and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) continue to pose a threat to civilian lives across Benghazi.

6. What's next

Uncertainty and tensions over GNA reform implementation

POLITICAL FORECAST

Libya's existing political institutions remain under growing pressure by various factions across the country to provide solid outcomes on the ground ahead of scheduled elections, despite fading prospects for the Paris roadmap. Overall, anti-GNA sentiment is increasing across the capital and wider Western region. The calls for the dissolution of the capital's militias are growing, suggesting the current status quo cannot be maintained and a new landscape may alternatively emerge. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has recently taken a more direct and assertive role in seeing the political process through, noting their involvement in the ceasefire between rival militias across Tripoli. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) extended the mandate of the UNSMIL until 15 Sep 2019. Meanwhile, the GNA faces the challenging task of implementing the announced reforms. The GNA would need to provide enough assurances that reforms will represent a durable solution, not a "quick fix". Moreover, in what will likely continue to be an ongoing dispute, the HoR passed a constitution referendum law that was rejected by Cyrenaica's members due to "violations", which effectively undermines the Paris elections roadmap after a failure to meet the 16 Sep deadline.

SECURITY FORECAST

Despite a tentative calm following shelling of Mitiga International Airport vicinity resulting in its subsequent closure on 11 Sep, the security situation will likely remain tense across Tripoli. On 16 Sep, the head of the Presidential Council (PC) announced the formation of a "Conflict Resolution Force" under the command of the Western Military Commander, Osama Juwaili, which includes battalions from the western and central regions, in addition to the counter-terrorism force. Additionally, Al-Serraj announced the handover of control of Mitiga International Airport to the Minister of Interior. Such decisions were likely prompted by growing anti-PC/GNA sentiment across the capital city and Wider Western region. Overall, Al-Serraj's announcements could potentially ignite tensions between Tripoli's militias as they may feel sidelined. In the wider West, protests against the existing political institutions have the potential to spread beyond Tarhuna and Al-Zawiya. In the South, if the Libyan National Army (LNA) mobilization proceeds, there is a strong possibility tensions will escalate among local groups, including Tebu tribesman. In Libya's East, the LNA's battle against militants shows no signs of slowing down in Derna. In Benghazi, Haftar will likely continue to increase security presence.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "Reuters", the author, Aidan Lewis, highlights the domestic and international division fueling the Libyan conflict. "Subsequent efforts to form a unity government with national backing ran aground in rival assemblies in Tripoli and the east, which themselves have only limited legitimacy. France has pushed for polls as a way to end the stalemate and hosted a summit in May at which the election date target of December 10 was set. Key figures including Haftar and GNA Prime Minister Fayez Seraj, both potential candidates, have publicly backed the idea of elections. The United Nations cites recent voter registration as evidence that Libyan citizens are keen for a national vote as a way to make a clean break. Others are more sceptical about early polls, notably Italy, the only Western state to have fully reopened its embassy in Tripoli. It has been vying with France for influence in Libya. Diplomats say privately that political, security and logistical challenges make a successful vote hard to achieve. The international community's latest attempts to get the eastern parliament to pave the way for elections have produced little concrete progress. The assembly, still recognised as the primary legislative chamber, is boycotted by many of its members and controlled by factions that have spurned the U.N. process and the GNA. They have used procedural delays and sometimes physical force to prevent key votes from taking place. A Paris summit deadline "to set the constitutional basis for elections and adopt the necessary electoral laws" by Sept. 16 will therefore be missed." said Lewis.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an interview with with Italian daily newspaper *Corriere Della Sera*, the Libyan Prime Minister Fayez Al-Serraj was cited as saying "Conditions in Libya are too unstable to hold elections" casting doubts on a French-led push for a vote in December which aims to end years of turmoil and unify the North African country. French President Emmanuel Macron hosted a conference in May where rival Libyan factions agreed to work with the United Nations (UN) for a national election by 10 December. Libya splintered following the 2011 Nato-backed revolt that toppled Muammar Gaddafi, and since 2014 has been divided between competing political and military groups based in Tripoli and the east. "You can not vote with instability in the streets ... it is necessary that everyone accepts the result of the ballot. We need shared rules," Seraj, who leads the UN-brokered transitional government based in Tripoli, said in an interview with Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*. Armed groups have vowed to resume hostilities if talks to be hosted by UN Special Envoy Ghassan Salame do not result in a lasting settlement. Seraj has close relations with Italy. His main rival, military commander Khalifa Haftar, is aligned with a government based in the east and is seen as closer to France. Seraj also said factions would need to agree on a constitution before any vote is held. "We had talked about elections in Paris, but the constitutional document, which is ready but not approved, must first be voted on," Seraj said. "Unfortunately, the parliament of Tobruk has not yet examined it. Without the constitution, how can one go to a national vote?"

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:

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