

1. The Big Picture

GNA post-clashes reshuffling widens East-West rift

This week, Government of National Accord (GNA)-sanctioned economic and security reforms would highlight follow-through on recent promises to reach a more favourable political settlement in Tripoli post-clashes. However, the reforms have simultaneously upset multiple factions in the East and beyond, potentially widening the East-West divide and paving the way for yet another political stalemate in Libya.

The week was marked by implementation of the economic reforms as banks reportedly began issuing documentary letters of credit (LCs) to businesses, albeit with the latest fees related to foreign currency transactions in a bid to undermine the parallel exchange market's influence.

Meanwhile, Tripoli's security landscape was marked by a retreat of the GNA-aligned 8th Force, known as Nawassi Brigade, from Tripoli port. This closely followed a similar development in Tripoli's Mitiga Airport as part of a push, supported by the UN, to facilitate armed groups' withdrawal from key institutions/buildings post-clashes. In addition, the GNA announced multiple cabinet reshuffles, including the appointment of Fathi Bashagha, a powerful Misrata figure, as GNA Interior Minister.

Thus far, the precise ramifications of the reforms are difficult to ascertain. On the security arrangements front, while some Tripoli militias, including Nawassi and the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) have shown they are amenable, opposition could begin to form in the short to medium term, especially given the prevailing security vacuum across the capital city, which remains a cause for concern. Meanwhile, it is likely that militiamen, especially prominent figures, will continue to operate, though under a new banner.

In terms of reshuffles, Bashagha's appointment is described by analysts as a clear surrender to Misrata and a partisan move by the GNA. Beyond this, some appointments have already escalated tensions among eastern-based factions, including the Obeidat tribe's anger over Ali Issawi's appointment as GNA Economy Minister due to his alleged role in a 2011 assassination of a tribesman.

There is mounting evidence to suggest the recent GNA reforms could contribute to an improved Tripoli security outlook, though at the expense of an exacerbated East-West divide. Amid unconfirmed reports suggesting some Italian politicians are opposed to Haftar's presence in the upcoming November conference in Palermo, the situation could increase perceptions of marginalization among eastern-based factions. However unlikely, this could result in potential disruptions in the East, including the Oil Crescent area as oil production begins to show signs of a partial recovery. In an alternative scenario, the East-West divide could transform into healthy competition ahead of the potential presidential elections, which are unlikely to be held in Dec 2018.

Despite economic reforms, security arrangements, and the latest reshuffles, a full stabilization can only be possible once Tripoli-based militias, and other groups, are effectively disarmed. Essentially, reforms could be short-lived and have not yet had any structural impact on the centralized security and economic landscapes in Tripoli and beyond as of 08 October.

KEY POINTS

- Impact of reforms remains unclear
- Tensions could increase in the East
- Prevailing security vacuum in Tripoli



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2. National Security Map

IS movements between Wadi Al-Ahmar & Umm Al-Kandil; militia clashes in Al-Zawiya

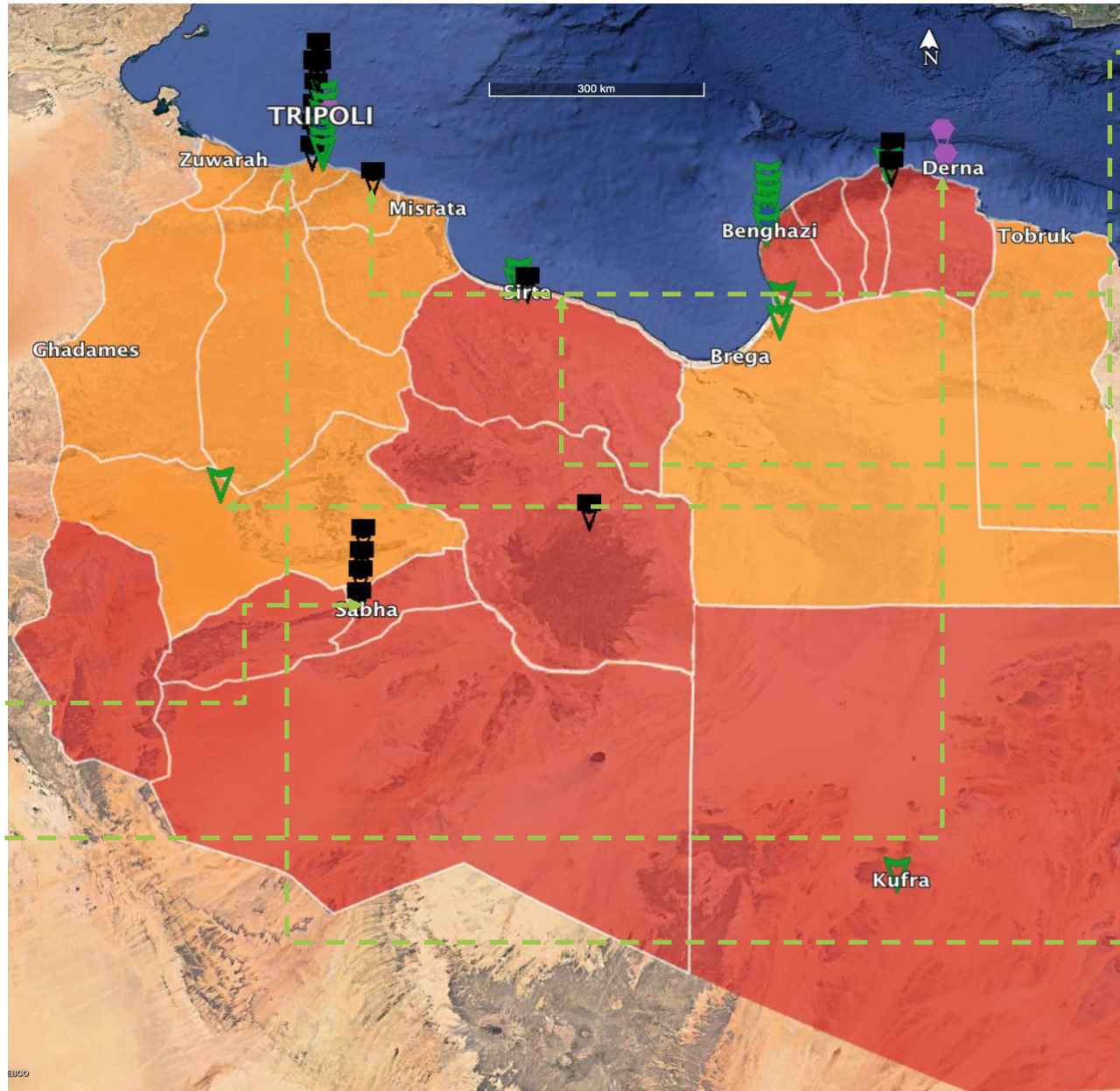
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



According to the Joint Security Chamber of Sabha, an unidentified armed group ambushed and attacked a security patrol resulting in at least one fatality and the injury of others near Sabha's Gareboun lake in the afternoon on 29 Sep.

The spokesman of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Ahmed Al-Mesmari, stated that the army is conducting security operations in Derna, noting that all military operations have ended, and the city is fully under LNA control on 03 Oct. Mesmari noted that security operations are run by the Security Room of Derna and the Omar Al-Mukhtar Operations Room.

Local reports suggest unidentified gunmen raided three water wells of the Great Man-made River Project in the Jabal Al-Hasawna area and intimidated the workers at approximately 0000hrs on 06 Oct.

Clashes reportedly erupted between locals resulting in the injury of two men and the closure of several roads across Khoms at approximately 1930hrs on 06 Oct.

According to the Security Director of Sirte, Maeouf Al-Madani, suspicious Islamic State (IS) movements were reported along the Coastal Road between the Wadi Al-Ahmar and Umm Al-Kandil areas on 30 Sep.

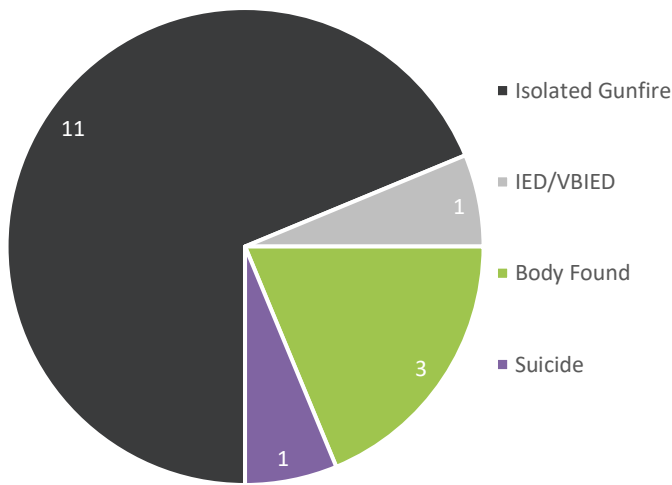
The Head of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Khalifa Haftar, issued decree No 303 of 2018 to annex the 101st Infantry Battalion to the 106th Brigade under the command of Mohammed Basit.

Clashes reportedly erupted between local militias following the killing of a leader of the "Abu-Abbaida Al-Zway" militia identified as Fadi Al-Saloqui in Az-Zāwiyah at night on 06 Oct.

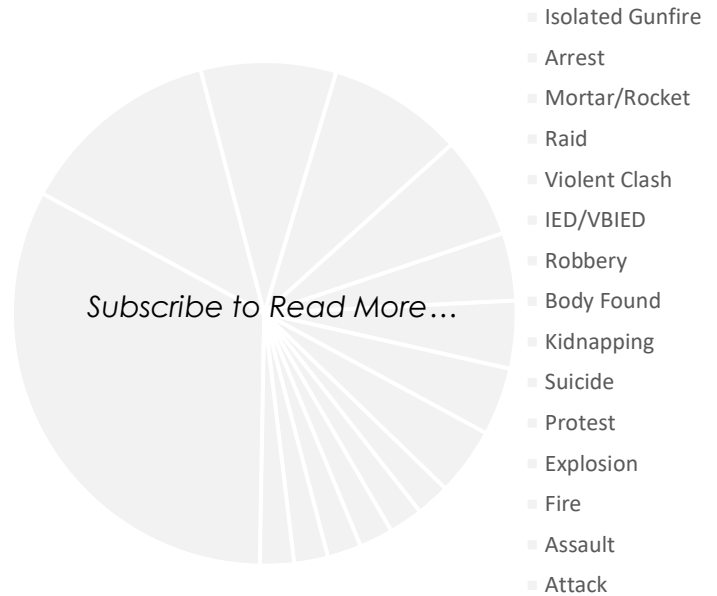
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Surge in cases of isolated gunfire while Tripoli incidents & fatalities decrease

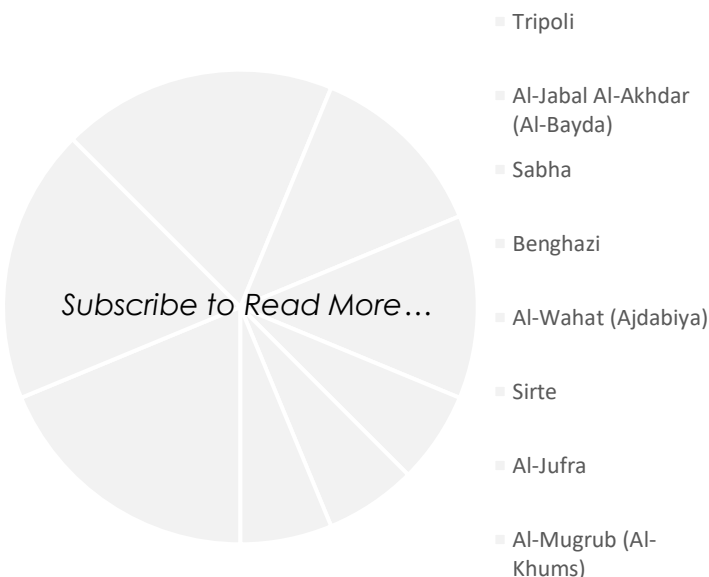
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



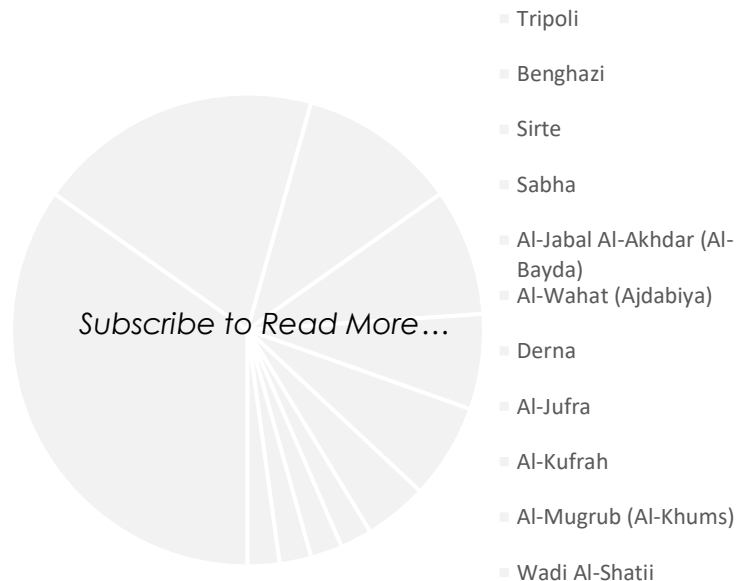
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



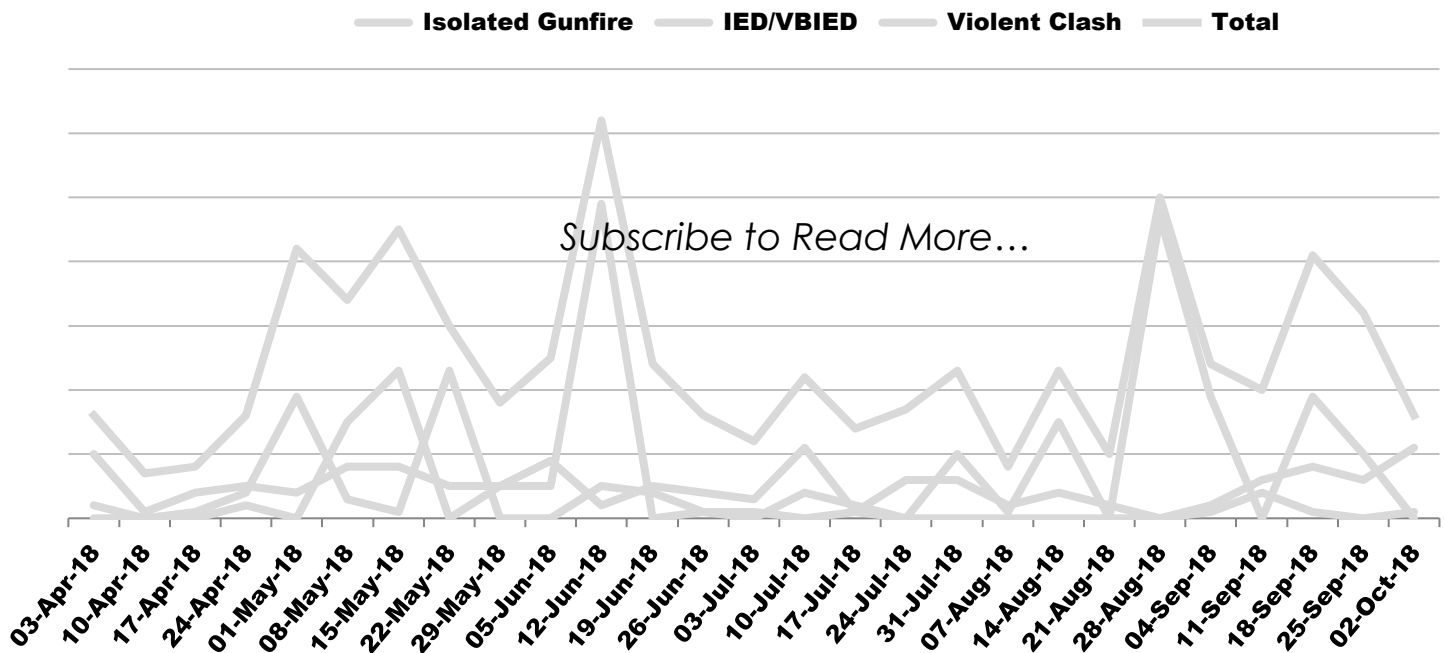
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 16 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 32 deaths reported last week and 41 the week before. This week was marked by a surge in isolated gunfire incidents, which accounted for more than half of nationwide fatalities numbers. Meanwhile, the number of Tripoli-based incidents and fatalities decreased relatively compared with the past week. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 15 cases of isolated gunfire, 3 episodes of violent clash, 2 IED/VBIED incidents, a total of 2 bodies found, and a fire incident.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 17 incidents, including 16 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. This week was marked by the discovery of an improvised explosive device (IED) in a gas station near Tripoli's Souk Al-Ahad Bridge on 29 Sep. The IED was reportedly attached to fuel tanks. There is no further information available and it remains unclear whether the IED was placed during the recent heavy militia clashes or as part of a separate plot to target the area. Meanwhile, reports suggest a drive-by shooting resulted in the death of a man affiliated with the Ghneiwa militia in Tripoli's Al-Fellah area at approximately 0000hrs on 30 Sep. Neither the identity of the assailant(s) nor the motive behind the incident are known. In a separate incident, unidentified assailant(s) attacked a checkpoint manned by a force affiliated to the leader of the Zintan Special Operations Forces (SOF), Emad Trabelsi, resulting in the death of a boy in front of Tripoli's Hai Alandalus' Police Station at approximately 0100hrs on 30 Sep. Unconfirmed reports suggest the attackers were affiliated with the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB).

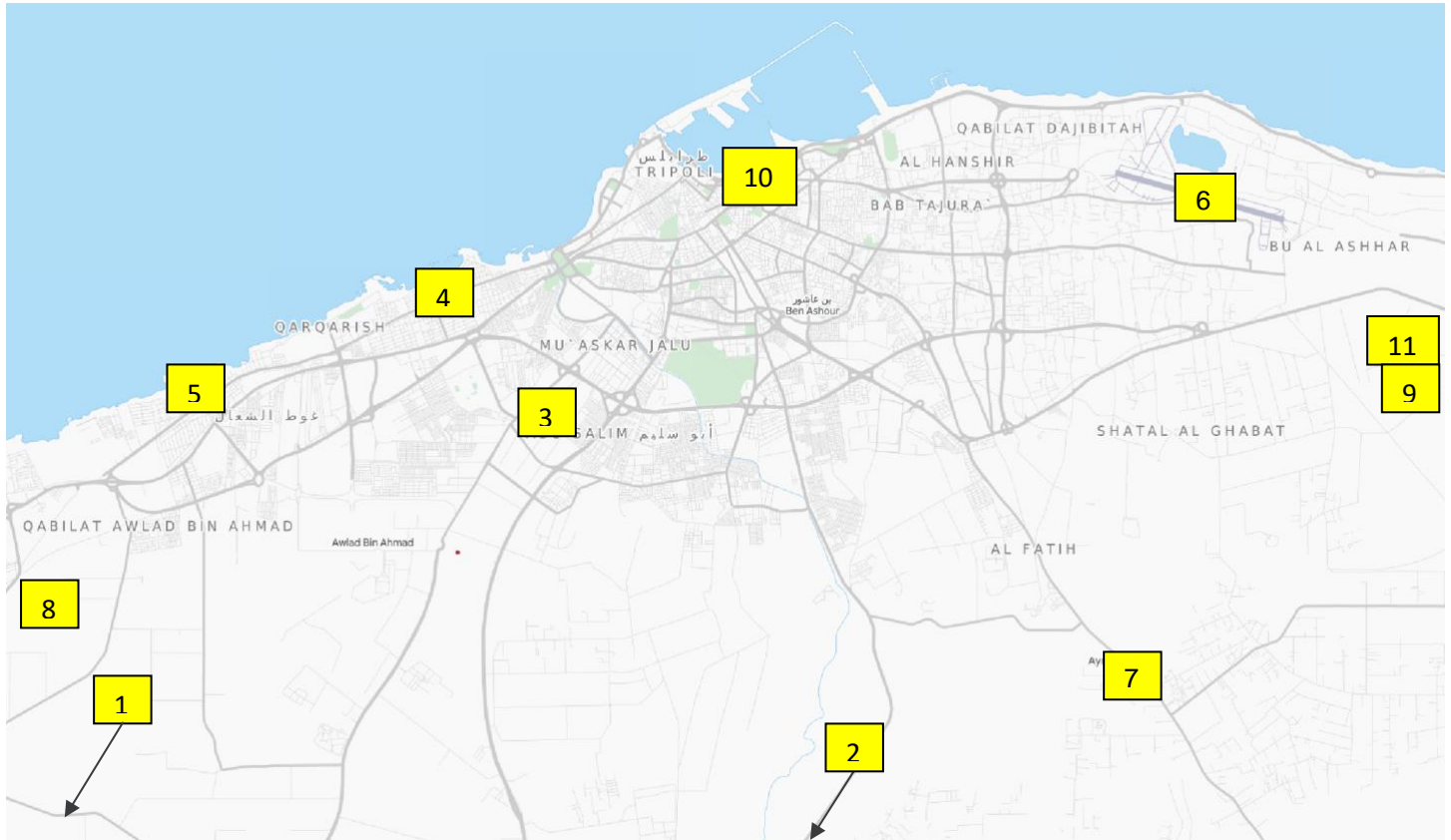
The week in Central Libya was marked by an armed gang attacking a Libyan family along the Coastal Road between Misrata and Sirte. Meanwhile, Islamic State (IS) movements were reported along the Coastal Road between the Wadi Al-Ahmar and Umm Al-Kandil areas on 30 Sep.

Turning to Libya's South, there was a surge in Chadian-affiliated activity, including kidnappings. Reports suggest Chadian gangs kidnapped 12 Libyan fishermen from Ajdabiya during a fishing trip 350 kms east of Al-Awainat near Kufra on 07 Oct. Chadian gangs also reportedly kidnapped 6 men travelling on the road between Al Fuqaha and Sabhā at night on 07 Oct.

In Libya's East, the spokesman of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Ahmed Al-Mesmari, stated that the army is conducting security operations in Derna, noting that all military operations have ended, and the city is fully under LNA control on 03 Oct.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Mitiga Intl. Airport targeted with rockets resulting in brief closure



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (29 Sep) Militia clashes cont. in An-Najilla area
2. (29 Sep) IED found near gas station; no security incidents
3. (30 Sep) Affiliate of Ghneiwa militia killed in drive-by shooting
4. (30 Sep) Attack on CP affiliated with SOF leader; boy killed
5. (01 Oct) Zintan forces raid counter Zintan members in Regatta HQ
6. (02 Oct) Mitiga Intl. Airport targeted with rockets; brief closure
7. (02 Oct) Local dispute results in injury of individual in Ain Zara
8. (02 Oct) Al-Sharara employees sit-in in front of company HQ in Janzour
9. (02 Oct) Man affiliated with militia securing bank killed in Tajoura
10. (04 Oct) Head of Security Bureau of Tripoli Seaport resigns
11. (05 Oct) Al-Bugra militia raid camp & transfer all force & weapons

Mitiga Intl. Airport targeted with rockets

Whispering Bell sources confirmed two rockets targeted Mitiga International Airport, resulting in its closure on 02 Oct. The incumbent Minister of Interior of the Government of National Accord (GNA), Abdelsalam Ashour, confirmed that a rocket targeted Tripoli's Mitiga's International Airport between approximately 0400hrs and 0600hrs on 02 Oct. Air traffic was halted briefly, though the airport reopened within a few hours. According to reports, the rocket landed near the airport's reception hall with no further reports of security incidents. Following the incident, a social media page dubbed "Capital's Youth Movement" claimed responsibility for the attack, though it remains unclear whether group is an offshoot or utilizing the movement's name. The targeting of Mitiga International Airport follows its gradual resumption of operations on 26 Sep after closing on 11 Sep due to shells. Despite a recent peace agreement reached between Souk Al-Jomaa and Tajoura, there are remaining grievances related to detainees currently held by the Special Deterrence Force (SDF), which were highlighted by the Tajoura Council of Elders in a statement. As a result, Al-Bugra militia's involvement is possible.

Head of Seaports' Security Bureau resigns

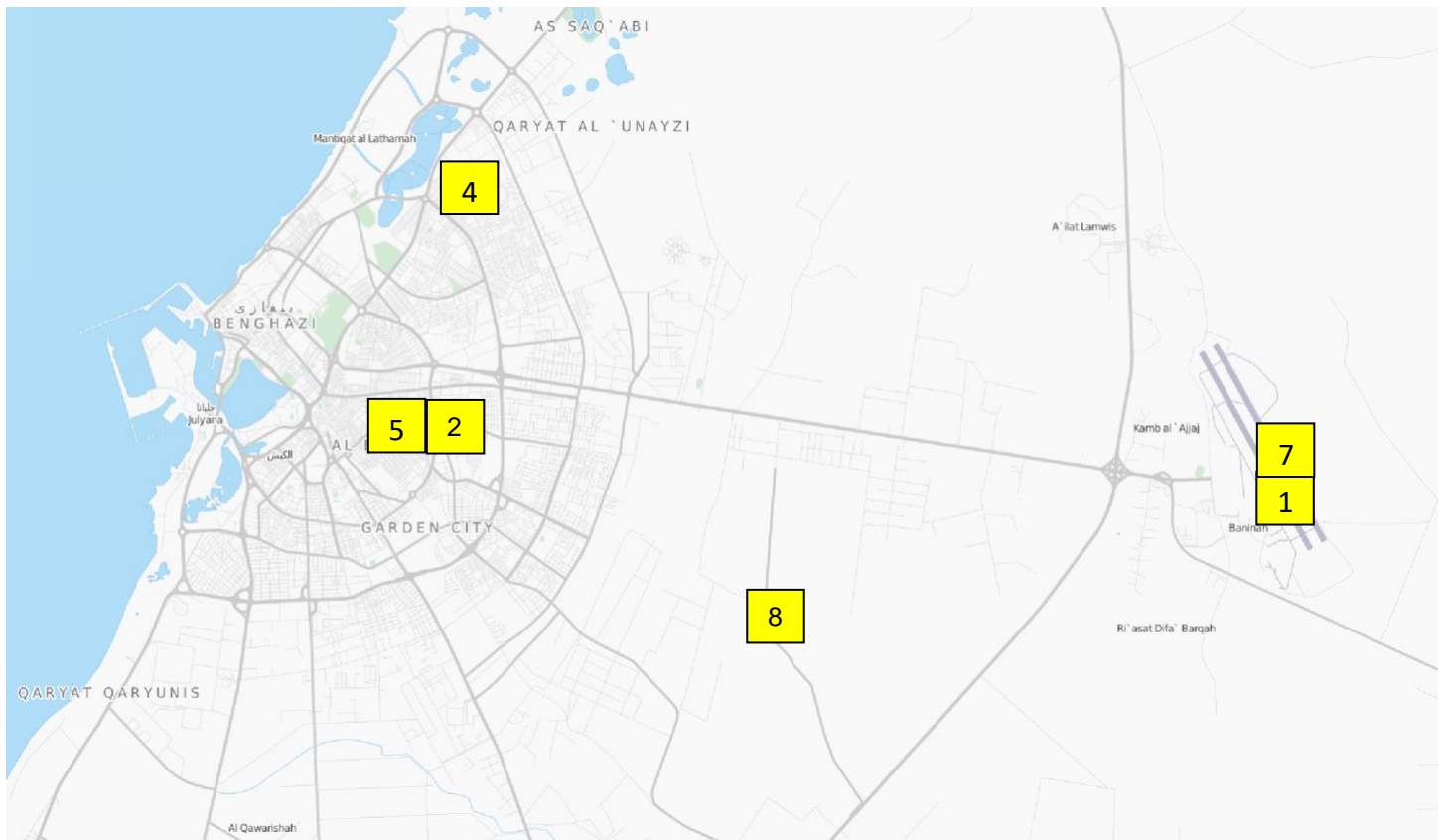
The Information Office of the Nawasi militia stated that the head of the Security Bureau of Tripoli's Seaport, Mustafa Ghaddour, submitted his resignation on 02 Oct. The Information Office noted that such a decision comes within the framework of activating the security arrangements for Tripoli to establish a state of law and order. Overall, the development would nominally highlight Al-Nawasi militia's cooperation with authorities on the implementation of new security arrangements across the city. Meanwhile, in an additional sign of security cooperation, the pro-GNA Tripoli Protection Force, noted the handover of all headquarters to the official bodies in the capital city.

Unconfirmed: heightened IS threat of attack

There are emerging reports of a heightened Islamic State (IS) threat against the expatriate community in Tripoli. The reports remain unconfirmed and there are no concrete plans or claims related to an imminent IS attack, despite circulation across multiple social media outlets. Whispering Bell sources confirmed some unidentified expatriate groups in Tripoli have reacted to the reports. Absent further information, Whispering Bell assesses the threat indicators of an IS attack in Tripoli remain unchanged.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Former Benghazi Mayor & son abducted; assassination attempt on secretary



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (30 Sep) Dispute between pilot & militiaman at Benina
2. (02 Oct) Former Mayor of Benghazi & son abducted
3. (02 Oct) Mortar shell removed from residential neighborhood
4. (02 Oct) Fire breaks out in old market; no security incidents
5. (02 Oct) Authorities raid house used for illicit activity
6. (03 Oct) NOC delays Oil & Gas Conference
7. (03 Oct) Interim Govt warns over potential airport closure
8. (06 Oct) Assassination attempt on secretary of former Mayor

Assassination attempt & abduction

Local reports suggest the secretary of the former Mayor of Benghazi, Tariq Edbish, survived an assassination attempt in Benghazi's Al-Fwihat area on 06 Oct. According to reports, unidentified gunmen intercepted Edbish's vehicle, opened fire, and subsequently escaped. Neither the identity of the assailants nor the motive behind the incident are known, though it is linked to the kidnapping of the Mayor of Benghazi and his son in Benghazi's Al-Hadaeq Street on 02 Oct. The whereabouts of the former Mayor Benghazi, Ahmed Areibi, and his son remain unknown and the incident has resulted in multiple condemnations from Eastern authorities, including the House of Representatives (HoR). There is a possibility the assailants behind Edbish's assassination attempt are affiliated and/or part of the same group as Areibi's kidnappers. The security environment in Benghazi would appear to be gradually destabilizing after months of relative calm.

Potential closure of Benina Intl Airport

Reports suggest Afriqiyah Airways cancelled a scheduled flight from Benina International Airport to Tunisia following an

attack on a pilot by a militiaman at night on 30 Sep. A dispute reportedly erupted between the pilot and one of the airport's security forces after the latter attempted to board people with forged bookings. Meanwhile, the Interim Government announced the decision to close Benghazi's Benina International Airport and the subsequent diversion of all flights to Labrag Airport within a week should the security, administrative and operational conditions deteriorate further.

IED explosion; body found

An improvised explosive device (IED) exploded resulting in the death of a 28-year-old man in Benghazi in the evening on 04 Oct. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, the body of a 20-year-old man was found following reports of unidentified assailant(s) robbing his belongings in Benghazi's Budzira area on 05 Oct.

Oil & Gas Conference to be held 24-26 Oct

On 03 Oct, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) stated that it postponed a 3-day Benghazi conference following an attack on its Tripoli headquarters on 10 Sep. The conference will be held from 24 Oct to 26 Oct, two weeks later than scheduled. Moreover, the conference aims at allowing local and foreign oil and gas companies to discuss the sector's development.

6. What's next

Tripoli Security arrangements unfolding; no clear roadmap for power-sharing

POLITICAL FORECAST

On the domestic political front, the Sarraj-led Government of National Accord (GNA) issued a series of decisions to replace existing ministers within various sectors, as such replacements come as part of a plan to implement new security arrangements on the ground. Meanwhile, 40 members of the House of Representatives (HoR) agreed to restructure the Presidential Council (PC) with one head and two deputies along with the unification of sovereign institutions to prepare for Presidential and Parliamentary elections following the voting on the constitution referendum. Additionally, in an interview with *Reuters*, Khalifa Haftar noted that he remains in support of holding elections, though he stated that other players failed to fulfil their part for the vote to take place. Internationally, Italy announced Nov 12 to Nov 13 as the dates for the “international meeting on/for Libya” in Palermo, Sicily. Whilst some observers suggest details on the conference remain vague, Italy will likely seek to take the lead on facilitating the political process after the French initiative largely stagnated. As Libya’s authorities project efforts of attempting to reverse the status quo, there remains no clear unified roadmap for a transitional power-sharing agreement determining the holding and successful outcomes of elections.

SECURITY FORECAST

This week was marked by the targeting of Mitiga International Airport with a rocket resulting in its brief closure in Tripoli. The incident highlights the fragile security situation on the ground that will likely persist despite an end to militia clashes. Meanwhile, early indicators of the implementation of new security arrangements were seen on the ground with Nawassi militia’s handover of Tripoli’s Seaport. However, such developments remain tentative, and outlawed groups that feel sidelined from the wider security arrangements may seek to destabilize the security situation in Tripoli and beyond. In the wider West, militia clashes in Al-Zawiya and local disputes in Al-Khoms could escalate due to acts of retaliation. In the central region, attacks on energy facilities will likely persist and increase local grievances due to power shortages. Reports of Islamic State (IS) movements near Sirte will likely prompt further cooperation between security bodies, including the Libyan National Army (LNA). In the South, Chadian gangs involved in local kidnappings persist, as the security vacuum widens despite a previous LNA announcement to mobilize a force to the region. In the East, the LNA will likely push operations further to rid Derna of militant presence, whilst a surge in security incidents challenges Benghazi’s relative calm.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for “*The Washington Post*”, the author, Sudarsan Raghavan, highlight how the recent surge in hostilities between rival militias hinders Western peace efforts. “Today, those militias are battling for the capital. Many of them have linked up with other armed factions to form larger, more-powerful armed groups that some analysts have dubbed “super militias.” Their goal, analysts say, is to assert political control, seize territory and wrest economic spoils, including a share of one of the continent’s largest reserves of oil and natural gas. Since the GNA’s establishment, a handful of local militias have grown powerful and wealthy, even as they remain nominally loyal to the government of Prime Minister Fayez Serraj. Today, those militias dominate the government through their control of key ministries and elements of the financial system, as well as by overseeing security in the capital. “They have grown into criminal networks straddling business, politics, and the administration,” Wolfram Lacher of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs wrote in an April research paper. “The pillaging of state funds — a hallmark of Libya’s political economy — now benefits a narrower group than at any previous point since the 2011 revolution.” Lacher added, “Actors excluded from this arrangement are building alliances to alter the balance of power in Tripoli by force.” said Raghavan.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for “*Petroleum Economist*”, the author, Chris Stephen, discusses the impact of Islamic State (IS) on Libya’s oil and gas sector. “Many assumed IS had been vanquished from Libya after its self-declared caliphate, around the coastal town of Sirte, was crushed in 2016 by militias aided by US air power. But Libya’s chaos has allowed the group to reform in bases deep in the Sahara, despite continuing US air strikes. The immediate effect of these attacks is a reported evacuation of foreign engineering staff. Oil services firm Schlumberger, which returned to Libya in 2017 after a three-year hiatus, announced plans earlier this year to up its presence. The NOC needs its expertise to repair facilities across the Sirte Basin and officials worry company bosses may decide Libya is now too dangerous. Outside powers hope that Libya’s chaos will be eliminated by elections for a new, united, government to end the east-west split between Libya’s UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli and its rival House of Representatives parliament in Tobruk. In May, talks in Paris hosted by French president Emmanuel Macron saw key Libyan leaders set December as the election date. But preparations are lagging, and the surge of recent violence has seen UN envoy Ghassan Salamé suggest that the election might be scrubbed.” said Stephen.

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