

1. The Big Picture

Uncertainty despite elections & unification optimism

The week was marked by continuing rumours of a Libyan National Army (LNA) North-West offensive, substantiated by a phased withdrawal from key positions in the South and ensuing security vacuum. Meanwhile, sentiment on the political front improved amid emerging reports of talks to form a unity government and efforts to hold elections, which would prove favourable to Haftar given his current posture.

A seemingly passive stance from the Misrata stronghold in the face of an LNA retreat from the South and reported movements northwards, coupled with the rising number of pro-LNA statements from tribes in the West, have contributed to theories that an agreement is in the works between Fayeze Sarraj, the Government of National Accord (GNA) PM, and Libyan National Army (LNA) commander Khalifa Haftar. It remains to be seen whether a unification deal or agreement to form a transitional government, if successfully negotiated, would gain the approval of all groups in the West.

Preparations for elections are now in full swing and will reportedly take precedence over the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) National Conference, which is said to represent more of a symbolic gathering. A push for elections would theoretically compel the GNA and LNA to mend ties, at least in the short term, as both would need to discuss arrangements to secure polls.

However, there are major roadblocks ahead of any unification deal and escalation remains a possible scenario in the short to medium term. Beyond the anticipated opposition from pro-Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) factions, Misrata's stance remains unclear. In fact, this week saw the first documented response from Misrata in relation to LNA military activity since its offensive in the South. Misrata's Al-Bunyan Marsous (BAM) spokesperson Maj.-Gen. Mohammed Ghassri declared BAM's readiness

to defend against any potential attack on Sirte, which he described as a war declaration. Ghassri's comment came in response to LNA movements South of the Sirte national district. Ghassri further declared the continuation of the general state of emergency in the Sirte national district and mobilization of the Sirte Protection Force (SPF).

Overall, the LNA's next move remains subject to speculation and rumours, which can work in Haftar's favour as he can convert fears into negotiating leverage. There are competing theories, with unconfirmed reports circulated by pro-Misrata social media outlets suggesting LNA units are planning to enter Tripoli via Ash Shwayrif, Bani Walid, and Tarhunah, to reach the Salah Eddin area, South-West of the capital. The reports, citing unidentified sources from BAM, suggest LNA forces are mobilizing in a camp in Ash Shwayrif while other reinforcements are being sent from Sabratah and Surman, which are considered pro-LNA towns in the West. Other conflicting reports suggest the LNA would prioritize control of Zawiyah before a potential, yet unconfirmed, direct move on Tripoli.

The ramifications of a Haftar-Sarraj agreement remain unclear, though in the run up to elections, the LNA is unlikely to opt for a direct confrontation with Misrata, and would prioritize more feasible options such as Aljmail, Sabratah, Zawiyah, Bani Walid, Tarhunah, and others.

KEY POINTS

- Focus on elections
- Misrata's stance remains unclear
- LNA to avoid confrontation w/ Misrata



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2. National Security Map

Tensions and movements East & South of Sirte; state of alert extended in Sirte district

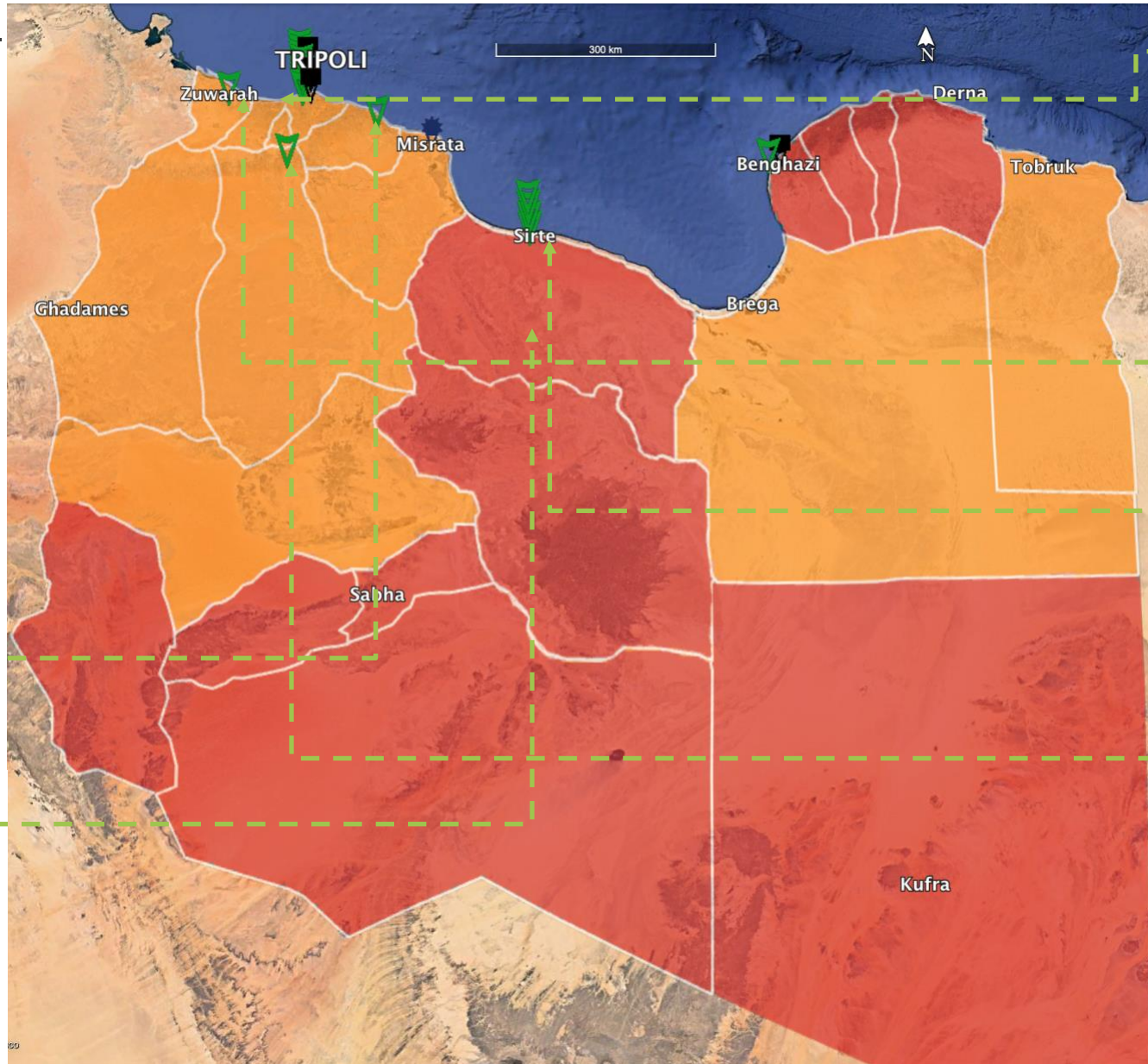
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



Three men from Zawiyah have been released from LNA custody on 15 Mar. The individuals were arrested in Saudi Arabia in June 2017 while performing pilgrimage and later transferred to eastern-based authorities in Libya, in a prison reportedly run by the LNA's Tarik Ibn Ziyad Brigade. The men's detention represented a long-standing issue with an impact on the threat and operating environment in Zawiyah.

Unconfirmed reports of pro-LNA and anti-GNA local protests in Ajmail, Riqdalin and A'ssah, on 16 Mar. No further information available.

Reports suggest a convoy of approximately 10 armed vehicles and a tank belonging to Misratan forces arrived East of Sirte at the 20 kms checkpoint East of the city, in the morning on 17 Mar. There is no further information available.

Reports suggest two gunmen raided the Administrative Complex and the HQ of Garyan Municipality in Garyan city, forcing staff to leave the building on 15 Mar. While the precise motive behind the raid is unclear, initial reports suggest the incident could be an attempt to free a prisoner as one of the gunmen's brother is allegedly detained by the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) in Tripoli.

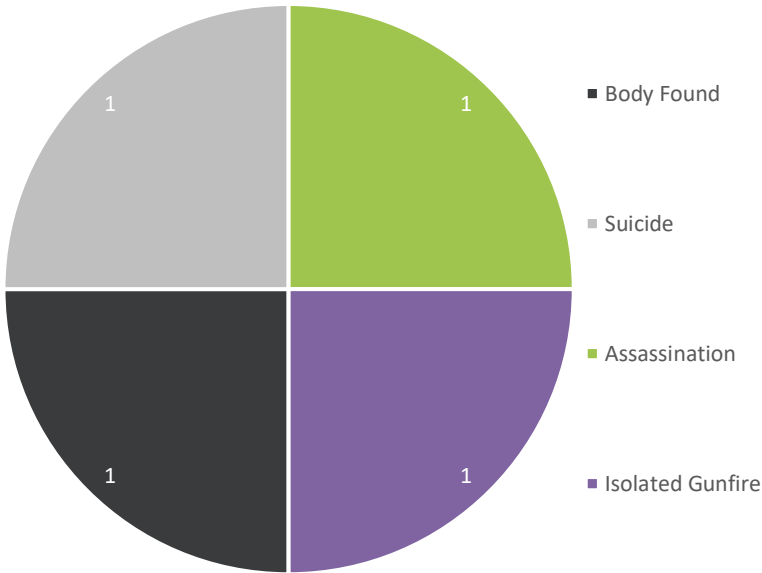
The Libyan Embassy in Oman announced it has received the initial approval from Oman's Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) to launch a flight route between the two countries.

Reports suggest a member of the House of Representatives (HoR) was physically assaulted by gunmen self-identifying as the "the union of Khoms rebels" on 07 Mar. The incident could be retaliation and is likely tied to Khoms municipality's recent opposition to a decision by the HoR speaker, Agila Saleh, to appoint an individual as advisor.

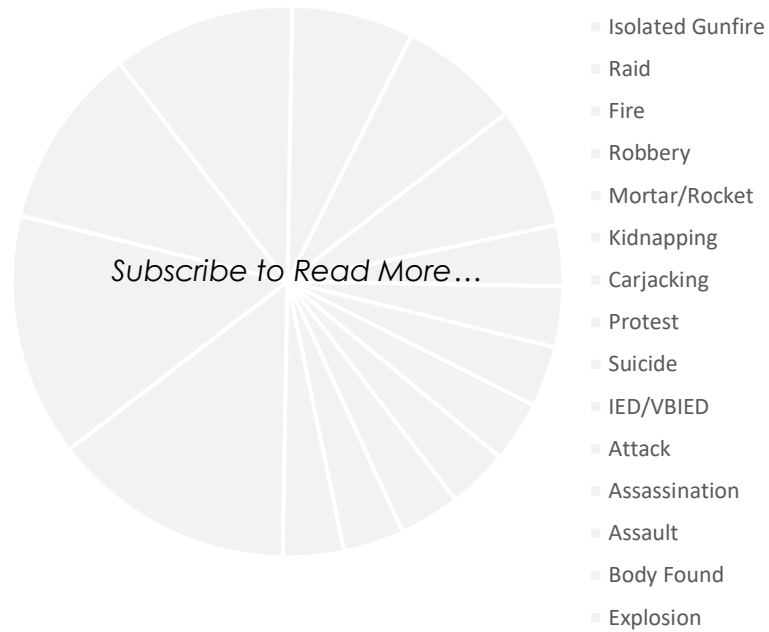
A Sirte Protection Force (SPF) unit and Bunyan Al-Marsous (BAM) counter-terrorism brigade conducted joint patrols along the administrative borders of the Sirte national district, South and East of Sirte, on 11 Mar. Meanwhile, reports of a military convoy affiliated with the LNA travelling on the coastal road of Mintaqat Wadi Harawah towards Sirte, at approximately 1730hrs on 11 Mar. In addition, there were unconfirmed reports of LNA movements in the Jufra national district on 11 Mar.

3. Nationwide Security Analysis Significant decrease in nationwide fatalities & Tripoli isolated gunfire incidents

Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



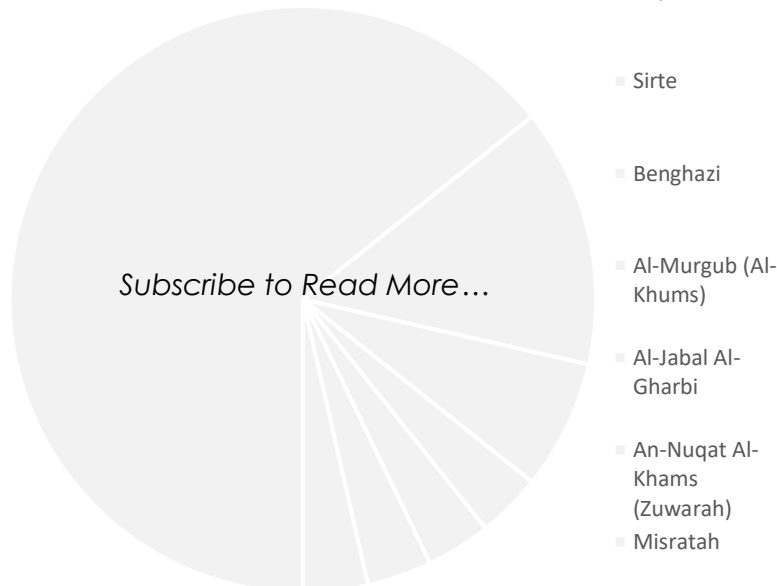
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



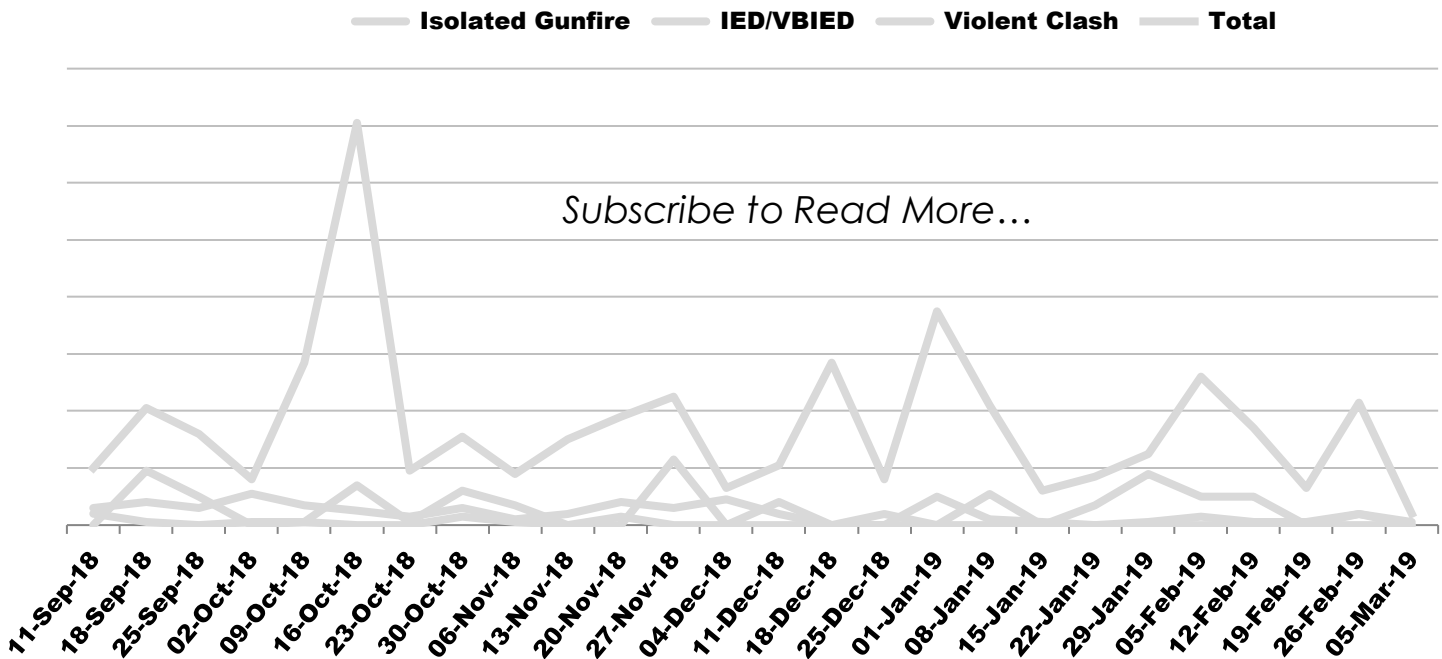
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by national district (Past week)



Nationwide Fatalities by Type of Attack (Past 27 Weeks)



Data Analysis

WB recorded this week a total of 4 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 43 deaths reported last week and 13 the week before. This week, over half of the Tripoli-based incidents were sporadic security incidents, including militia raids and gunfire-related incidents. However, there was a sharp drop in isolated gunfire incidents recorded in the capital city. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country including, 4 cases of isolated gunfire, 4 raids, 3 robberies, 2 mortar/rocket, 2 kidnappings, 2 carjackings, 1 body found, 1 assassination, 1 protest and 1 case of assault.

In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 22 incidents, including 18 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. In Tripoli, gunmen affiliated with a Zintan militia raided Al-Wahat Centre in Tripoli's Hai Alandalus area and assaulted the administrative staff, while expelling some shop owners who allegedly refused to pay a bribe, in the afternoon on 10 Mar. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, a group of gunmen affiliated with Ghneiwa raided an office of Alrahila Oil Services Company in Tripoli's Bab Ben Ghashir on 12 Mar. Initial reports indicate the company's employees are planning a strike in the coming days to denounce the Ghneiwa militia's interference. Reports suggest Ghneiwa militiamen have been assigned to work for the company by its Chairman who allegedly has connections to the militia. Beyond, in the wider West, reports suggest two gunmen raided the Administrative Complex and the HQ of Gharyan Municipality forcing staff to leave the building on 15 Mar. While the precise motive behind the raid is unclear, initial reports suggest the incident could be an attempt to free a prisoner as one of the gunmen's brother is allegedly detained by the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) in Tripoli.

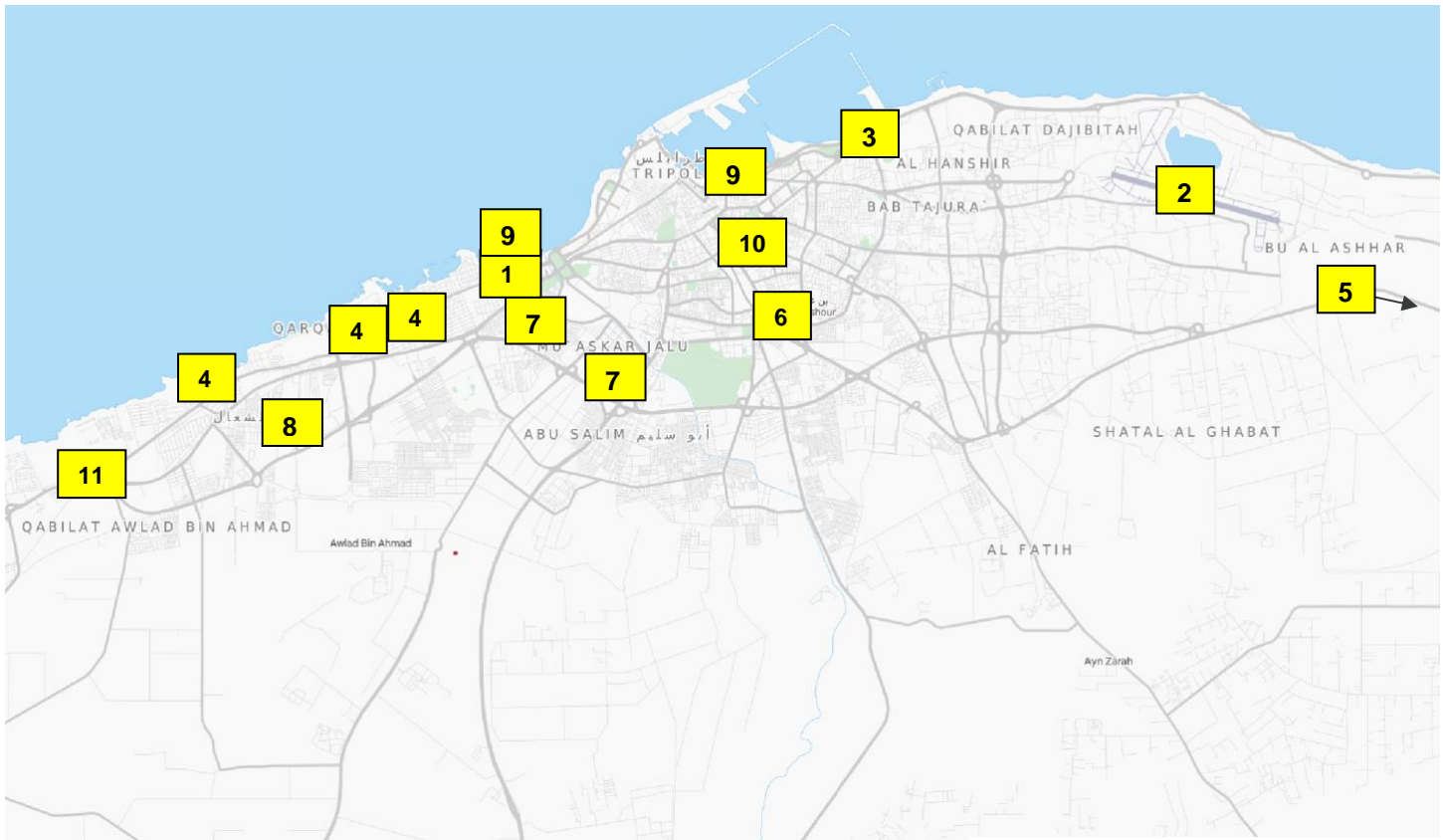
This week in Central Libya a group of gunmen affiliated with the Sirte Protection Force (SPF) raided Oqba Ben Nafae High School in Sirte in attempt to arrest a student with whom they are engaged in a dispute in the morning on 12 Mar. The raid resulted in indiscriminate gunfire in school premises, prompting a general evacuation of students. No casualties were reported. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, the Sirte Security Directorate found the body of a young male washed ashore on a beach in the city on 10 Mar.

Turning to Southern Libya, the Sabha Ops Room resumed its work following orders by the LNA Sabha Military Region commander, Maj.-Gen Mabrouk Ghazwi, and in coordination with the Sabha Security Directorate on 11 Mar. Separately, an attack on Sabha's security department, resulted in the death of a policeman at Sabha's 5th October roundabout on 15 Mar.

In Eastern Libya, reports suggest an officer of Benghazi's Criminal Investigations Department (CID) was killed in a drive-by-shooting incident on 15 Mar, whilst two indiscriminate shells landed on As-Sulmani area injuring 6 civilians.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Serraj assassination attempt at MJI denied; Zintan-Janzour militia clashes



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (10 Mar) Gunmen affiliated with Zintan militia raid Al-Wahat Centre
2. (11 Mar) GNA spox. denies Serraj assassination attempt at MJI
3. (11 Mar) Unconfirmed evacuation of GNA MoD in Abu Sittah Naval Base
4. (12 Mar) GNA Mol assigns SDF to Hai Al-Andalus, Qergarish & Seyahiya
5. (12 Mar) Unidentified military aircraft flying over Tajoura
6. (12 Mar) Ghneiwa gunmen raid office of Al-Rahila Oil Co; planned strike
7. (13 Mar) Two carjackings near Ghargour & in front of Al-Sahara Bank
8. (14 Mar) Gunmen assassinate Zintani male & Trabelsi affiliate in Ghut Shaal
9. (15 Mar) Al-Serraj inspects multiple buildings across Tripoli
10. (15 Mar) Ceremonly held to assign new CoS & Deputy CoS in PM Office
11. (17 Mar) Clashes between Zintan militia & Janzour Mobile Force

GNA denies Serraj assassination attempt

The Government of National Accord (GNA) spokesperson, Mohamed Al-Sellak, refuted claims the GNA PM, Fayez Serraj, was targeted in a failed assassination attempt at Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport (MJI) on 11 Mar. Conflicting reports emerged over a failed assassination attempt targeting Serraj's convoy, upon his arrival at Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport (MJI) from Doha, Qatar, at night on 11 Mar. The reports suggest a group of gunmen affiliated with the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) exchanged insults and verbally abused Serraj, accusing him of being an "undercover agent of Qatar". Serraj's security detail then reportedly attacked an SDF member who had shown his pistol. The altercation would have resulted in warning shots being fired in the air. Other reports suggest Serraj arrived at MJI's Gate 9, adjacent to the VIP lounge, and later evacuated the airport using armoured vehicles upon hearing gunfire. WB sources denied Serraj was targeted in an assassination attempt. The latest reports suggest the gunfire incident only coincided with Sarraj's arrival.

GNA Mol assign SDF to new areas

On 12 Mar, GNA Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha assigned the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) to secure Tripoli's Hai Alandalus, Qergarish and AlSeyaheyya areas

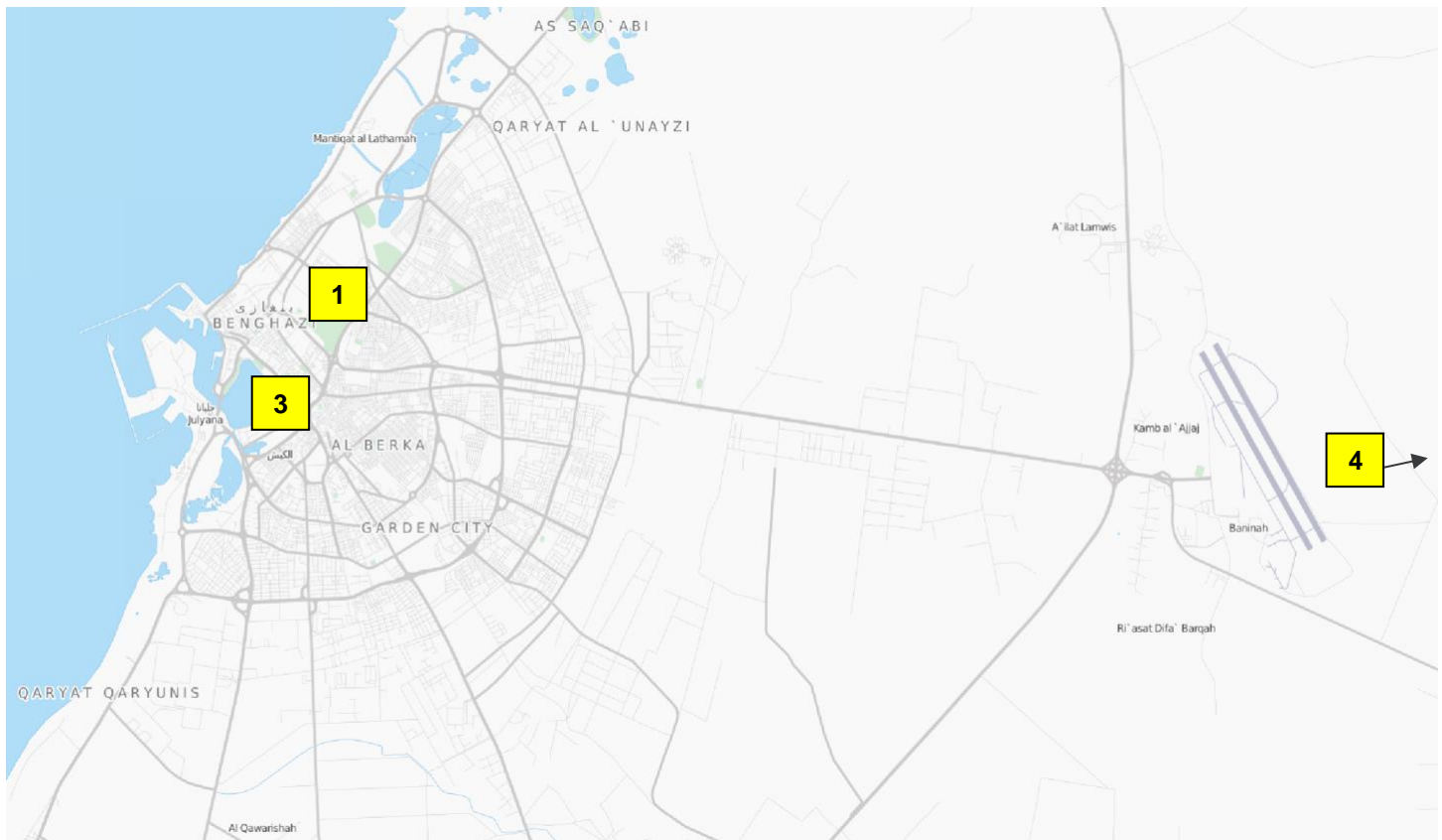
The decision would closely follow a surge in security incidents, including extortion attempts, by Zintan militias affiliated with Emad Trabelsi. In addition, a statement was issued to rename Central Security Directorate to the "Central Support Directorate". WB recently recorded a surge in militia-related criminal activity, including extortion attempts, across Tripoli.

Clashes between Zintan & Janzour militias

There were reports of heavy gunfire across Tripoli's Janzur, Al Serraj, Ghut Shaal and Al-Seyaheyya areas due to a dispute escalating into clashes between Zintan militia members and Janzour's Mobile Force at the Algeran Roundabout between 0100hrs and 0400hrs on 17 Mar. A security environment is stable as of the morning of 17 Mar, with Zintan militia presence reported at the Algeran Roundabout. Unconfirmed reports suggest the dispute erupted after a drive-by shooting targeted Zintan militia members stationed in front of the Regata Diplomatic Resort. Additional unconfirmed reports suggest the dispute erupted after a member affiliated with Zintan militias was allegedly captured by the Fursan Janzour Battalion and handed over to SDF after the Zintan affiliate was reported carrying pictures of Khalifa Haftar, during a demonstration held in the People's Hall parking lot on 01 Mar. Beyond, reports suggest a tank and military convoy consisting of approximately 10 anti-aircraft vehicles was moving on Ghut Shaal's main road headed towards Algeran Roundabout, at approximately 0300hrs on 17 Mar.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Reported scheduled Salame-Haftar meeting in Ar-Rajmah



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (12 Mar) Two Indiscriminate shells land on As-Sulmani; 6 injured
2. (14 Mar) Trabelsi-led Zintan militias meet security head
3. (15 Mar) CID officer killed in drive-by shooting near Sports City
4. (16 Mar) Reported scheduled Salame-Haftar meeting

CID officer killed in drive-by shooting

Reports suggest an officer of Benghazi's Criminal Investigations Department (CID) was killed in a drive-by-shooting incident on 15 Mar. Unidentified gunmen driving a military vehicle reportedly killed the CID member while he was on duty at a checkpoint near Al Madinah Ar Riyadiyyah. CID officers are often targeted by criminals in retaliation for recent arrests and/or apprehensions.

Indiscriminate shells injure 6 civilians

Reports of two indiscriminate shells landing on a street in Benghazi's Eastern As Sulmani area, resulting in six civilian casualties in the evening on 12 Mar. Initial reports indicate the shells were fired with an RPG as part of celebrations in a nearby residential neighborhood.

Reported Salame-Haftar meeting

On 16 Mar, reports emerged over the local media outlet "The Libyan Address" of a scheduled meeting between the Libyan National Army (LNA) head, Khalifa Haftar, and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) head, Ghassan Salame, in the upcoming 48 hours in Ar-Rajmah. The outlet, citing an unidentified source,

reported that the scheduled meeting aims at finalizing the terms of the meeting between Haftar and the Presidential Council (PC) head, Fayez Al-Serraj, in Abu Dhabi on 27 Feb. The Abu Dhabi meeting resulted in an agreement to end the country's transitional period by holding elections. Beyond, the unidentified source noted that the upcoming meeting would come amid a "general atmosphere of optimism" with regards to reaching a solution that would end the political deadlock and secure the participation of all parties in running the state. The Salame-Haftar meeting, if confirmed, would stand as a positive development in following up on the initial Haftar-Serraj agreement announced in the aftermath of the Abu Dhabi meeting and would highlight increased talks between key East-West factions amid a critical period for the country.

Zintan militias meet key security official

Reports emerged over Zintan militias affiliated with the Special Operations Forces (SOF) head, Emad Trabelsi, meeting with Benghazi's Security Directorate head in the city on 14 Mar. The outcomes/motives behind the visit remain unclear, though it would indicate the willingness of key Western militia factions to cooperate with Eastern security officials.

6. What's next

Rumoured Sarraj-Haftar meeting; election-related violence possible

POLITICAL FORECAST

The UN DSRSG, Stephanie Williams, is visiting multiple local tribes and cities across the West, in a reported attempt to secure their “buy-in” for the National Conference. On 13 Mar, Williams met with members of the Political Bureau of the Tripoli Protection Force (TPF). The TPF reaffirmed its interest in forming a larger coalition. Meanwhile, the date and venue for the National Conference are yet to be officially announced and reports suggest the focus will be on elections instead with the Conference representing more of a symbolic event. In the East, a UN and African Union (AU) delegation met with Haftar in the East – after a similar meeting with Sarraj earlier this week – to stress the importance of a political settlement and elections in Libya. In a statement on 12 Mar, European Union (EU) ambassadors to Libya, reaffirmed their full support for Ghassan Salame, in his efforts to secure a political agreement and end the transitional stage in Libya via elections. The EU Member States urged the GNA and Central Bank of Libya (CBL) to provide necessary funding for these efforts, alluding to municipal elections. Further, the statement emphasized the effectiveness of issuing sanctions against those who undermine peace and security. The statement would help reinvigorate the UNSMIL political roadmap and grow confidence in elections.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

Writing for *Bloomberg*, journalist Samer Al-Atrush, discusses the prospect of a Haftar-led offensive on Tripoli. He writes “But Haftar has continued to indicate that an offensive on Tripoli is looming, according to three Western diplomats who declined to be named. Rumors his self-styled Libyan National Army is building up troops and weapons in the west are adding to the anxious mood. LNA spokesman Ahmed al-Mismari said as recently as February that elections could only take place once the whole country was secure.” The articles further reads: “Already in control of Libya’s main oil-exporting terminals, the LNA has secured its biggest oil field since beginning its southern campaign in January. That puts Haftar in control of more than 1 million barrels of production a day, giving him crucial leverage over the OPEX member’s key source of income as well as command of its most powerful fighting force. Libya-watchers say Haftar could simply be exploiting fears about his motives as negotiating leverage. Despite the tensions, diplomats said talks were underway to form a unity government that could give Haftar more political sway in Tripoli and offer a path out of the crisis.” Further, “While better organized than rivals, Haftar’s forces are a disparate collection of moderately-trained troops and guns-for-hire. They could face more determined opposition around Tripoli as well as Misrata and Sirte, where local militias jealously guard their hard-won autonomy. A Misratan official said a force had prepared recently to attack the LNA’s rear but later stood down. “Misrata won’t fight unless Haftar comes to the city,” he said.”

SECURITY FORECAST

In Tripoli, tensions are high between the Special Deterrence Force (SDF or RADA) and Zintani militias, amid reports of a deadline set by RADA for Zintani militias to surrender their positions in Hay Alandalus and other nearby areas in Tripoli’s West. Skirmishes are possible in the short to medium term. In the wider West, more tribes are expected to pledge their allegiance to the LNA, with the possibility of internal discord and clashes between pro/anti LNA factions across western towns. The LNA could consolidate its control of Aljmail, Sabratabh, and possibly the Mellitah complex. Election-related violence in western towns is possible ahead of the 30th March deadline for municipality elections. In the Sirte national district, BAM movements and an extension of the state of alert stand as evidence of the prevailing tensions in the area. While a direct Misrata-LNA confrontation remains unlikely, skirmishes are possible. In Benghazi, criminal gangs and sleeper cells continue to define the threat and operating environment. A deteriorating security environment has prompted the LNA’s Tarik Ibn Ziyad Brigade to mobilize at the city’s entrances/exits. In the South, the LNA’s retreat has resulted in a vacuum highlighted by emerging reports of an attack and kidnapping of locals by Islamic State (IS) militants accompanied by foreign rebels.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In a *Libya Times* Op-Ed, Libyan researcher Adam Ghallab, argues that “Mistrust among Libyan stakeholders will indefinitely block any prospect for agreeing a new constitution.” The author goes on to contend “How will the National Conference overcome the lack of a legal ground for elections remains to be seen. However, consolidating the LPA — which has prevented a repetition of the 2014 civil war — is undoubtedly the right approach to retain short term stability. That said, Ghassan Salame, UNSMIL’s chief, should not lose sight of the fact that his main objective remains facilitating a permanent solution, especially when one exists right in front his nose.” Ghallab then presents a way forward “Having exhausted all other options, it’s high time for UNSMIL to seek support for its stabilization efforts from Crown Prince Mohammed El-Senussi. [...] Recent polls have shown that Libyans are so desperate for stability that they would accept any willing strongman as their saviour. With the exception of hard-line former regime loyalists, this suggests that the Crown Prince should have no problem in appealing to a wide majority of the Libyan public. In fact, over the last eight years, several factions have reached out to him offering their support including tribes, political parties and armed groups. And although he had turned down all such offers for being driven by either regional or tribal agendas, this demonstrates how those factions, which disagree on almost everything, were united in the belief that a return to monarchy was a viable solution to Libya’s political crisis. In preparation for this paper, I have met the Crown Prince and found him to be willing and more than ready for such an historic mission.”

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