

# 1. The Big Picture

## LNA gains in Gharyan's South; indefinite closure of Mitiga

No significant progress has been made in combat operations between Libyan National Army (LNA) and Government of National Accord (GNA) this week. The LNA pursued its offensive to recapture Gharyan, seizing Ghout Al-Reeh, Kalipa and Sllahat in the South on 26 Aug, though GNA forces maintained their positions North of the city, claiming the LNA's advance was repelled. Local reports indicate GNA forces' defensive posture was initially shaky before the arrival of reinforcements from Western Region Commander Osama Juwaili and the 301 battalion. Fighting was the heaviest on the outskirts of Gharyan since the GNA's capture of the strategic town in Jun 2019. In Tripoli, however, engagement remained intermittent across Wadi Rabei, Ain Zara, and the Airport Road.

Clashes then moved to the strategic town of Al-Zatarna, South-West of Garabolli's coastal road, as GNA forces launched a counter-attack, before being forced to retreat towards Ghwea and Garabolli on 28 Aug. Meanwhile, LNA forces claimed at least 20 GNA men died in what was described as a failed counter-attack in Al-Zatarna. The LNA then claimed it consolidated posture on Tripoli's outskirts and gained ground in Ain Zara. This uptick in engagement was followed by limited activity across all axes/frontlines between 30 Aug and 02 Sep.

Meanwhile, in Tripoli, inter-militia tensions continued to dominate the security environment. Reports suggest skirmishes erupted between Tripoli's Ghneiwa and Misrata's Sumoud Brigade over the targeting of fellow militiamen between 28-30 Aug. While tensions do not appear to have escalated further since, multiple LNA accounts exploited the incident as part of a broader strategy to sow divisions among nominally pro-GNA militias. The Dignity Ops Room Media Centre claimed in the aftermath of the dispute that the Salah Badi-led Sumoud Brigade established an arrest

list that includes Ghneiwa and Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) members.

Further in Tripoli, Mitiga International Airport (MJI), the capital city's only-functioning airport, has been closed indefinitely and until further notice after shells wounded civilian passengers and resulted in physical damage to an Airbus A-330 aircraft, the runway, and parked vehicles at approximately 0100hrs 01 Sep. At the time of publication, no timeline has been set by the Libyan Civil Aviation Authority (LYCAA). Sources suggest all commercial flights will be redirected to Misrata International Airport (MRA) in the next few days. While attacks targeting MJI have increased in frequency over the past two months, the latest disruption appears to be more significant given the airport's indefinite closure.

Separately, on the oil & gas front, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) published its monthly revenue report, recording 2.1 billion US dollars (USD) in revenue from sales of crude oil and derived products in July, marking a month-on-month increase of 403 million USD (+23%). The NOC attributed the increase to a busy loading schedule at the end of Jun. The NOC chairman, Mustafa Sanalla, was quoted stating "in spite of month-on-month growth, Libya's oil sector remains vulnerable to security shocks. Two separate security incidents on the Sharara pipeline lowered revenue receipts." Sanalla reiterated that oil and gas revenues account for over 92% of Libya's budget, whilst noting that revenues continue to be generated despite less than 58% of the NOC's annual budget being approved and received.

### KEY POINTS

- LNA seizes positions South of Gharyan
- GNA counter-attack in Al-Zatarna repelled
- Mitiga airport hit by shells; Al-Bugra militia



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# 2. National Security Map

State of alert in Sirte due to LNA movements; IS movements reported in Garabouli

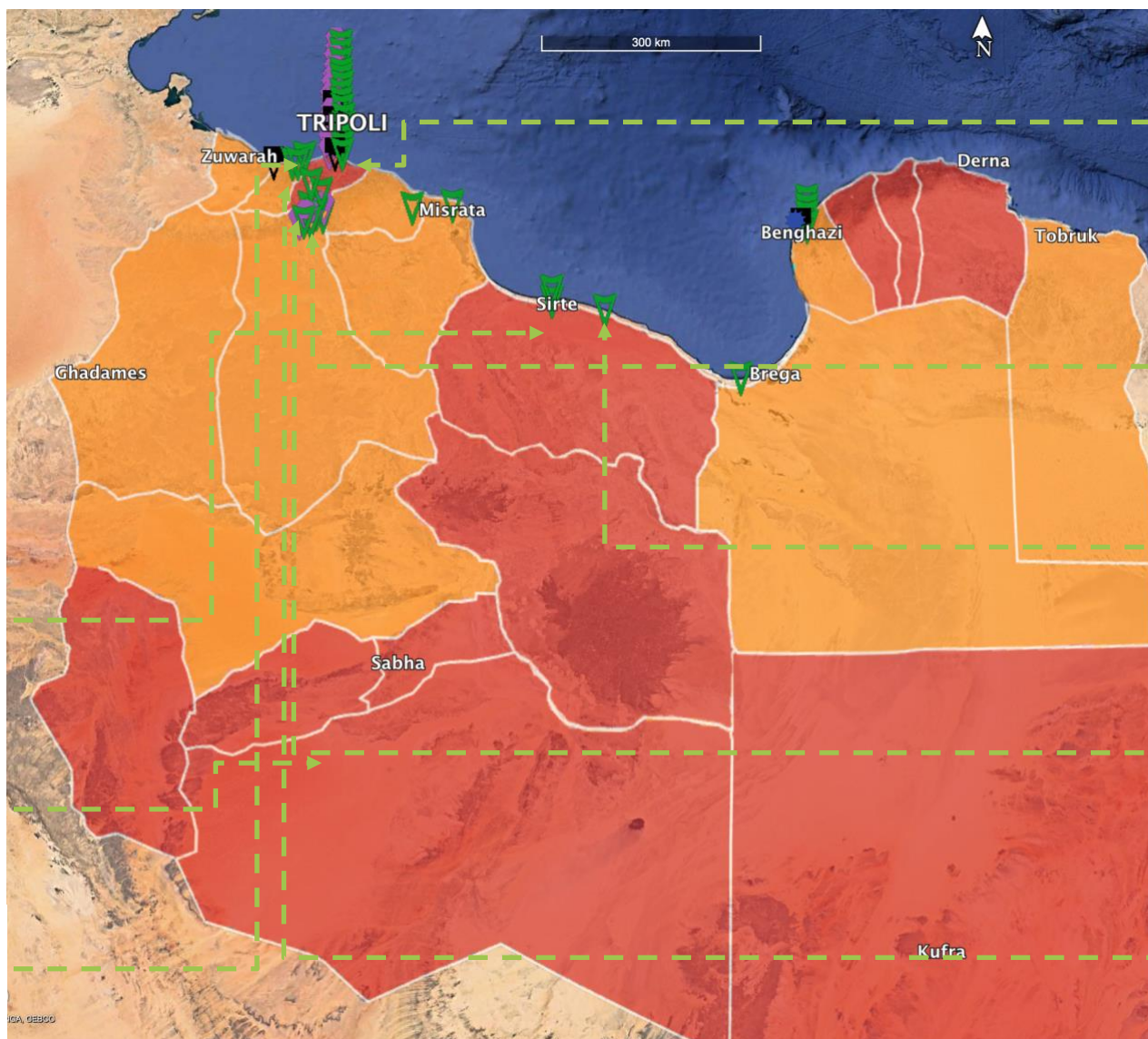
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



Misrata's Bunyan Al-Marsous (BAM) spokesman, Mohammed Al-Ghasri, reported Islamic State (IS) movements in the Garabouli area on 31 Aug. Al-Ghasri noted the possibility that illegal/clandestine migration in the area could facilitate IS militants' infiltration. No further information.

Clashes erupted between GNA and LNA forces South of Gharyan's Western mountains, near Al-Ghadama Checkpoint and Jandouba Gas Station at approx. 1530hrs on 27 Aug. Simultaneously, an LNA-affiliated military convoy advanced from the Eastern area of Silhate, to the Western mountains.

Unidentified gunmen stormed Harawah's water station and intimidated workers at gunpoint, forcing them to open a valve supplying water to nearby farms on 26 Aug. Reports indicate the station was closed due to increased water supply demand .

LNA accounts reported the arrest of the GNA's Gharyan field commander, Nasser Shaitbah, on 26 Aug. Meanwhile, reports indicate GNA forces captured the LNA's Gharyan Ops commander, Fawzi Abuhrrara, in the Wadi Bin Wazir area on 26 Aug.

General Electricity Company of Libya (GECOL) reported an unidentified individual opened fire inside a power station in the Beir Hawissa area, South of Al-Zawiya, in an attempt to intimidate the workers and shut down the station on 25 Aug. The attacker damaged a power transformer, disconnecting power to the Beir Hawissa area.

Reports indicate Sirte's Security and Protection Force (SPF) established additional checkpoints and increased security presence both in the city and near its southern entrance (Qasr Abu Hadi area) in the evening on 31 Aug. The SPF raised its state of alert after reportedly monitoring LNA movements South of Sirte.

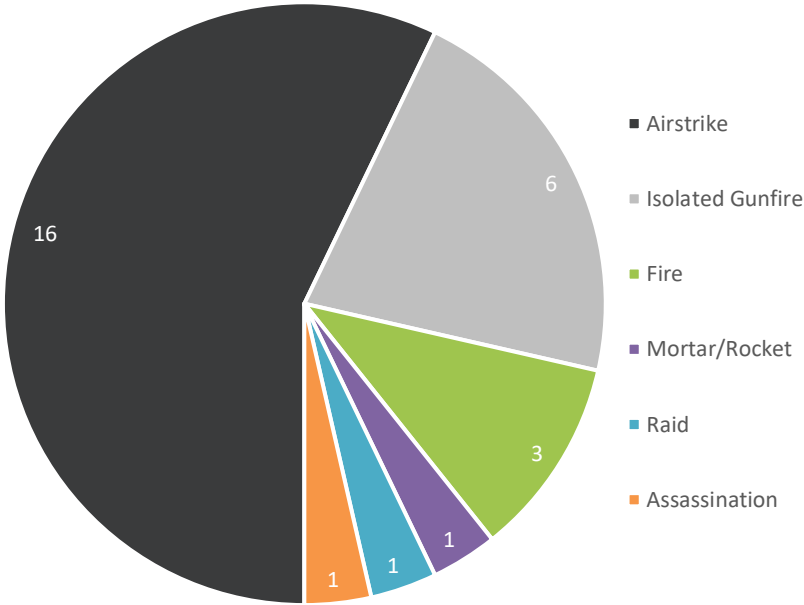
An LNA airstrike targeted Chadian opposition groups in Murzuq in the afternoon on 31 Aug. No casualties reported as of 02 Sep. The airstrike follows recent tribal tensions in the area and a Tebu-led offensive that prompted some LNA units to retreat, according to local reports.

Reports suggest family members raided a house in Al- Zawiya, killing a man and wounding a brother and sister, in the early hours of 28 Aug. Initial reports indicate the raid followed a local dispute between two young men at night on 27 Aug. Relatives of the wounded man later raided the local's house in retaliation.

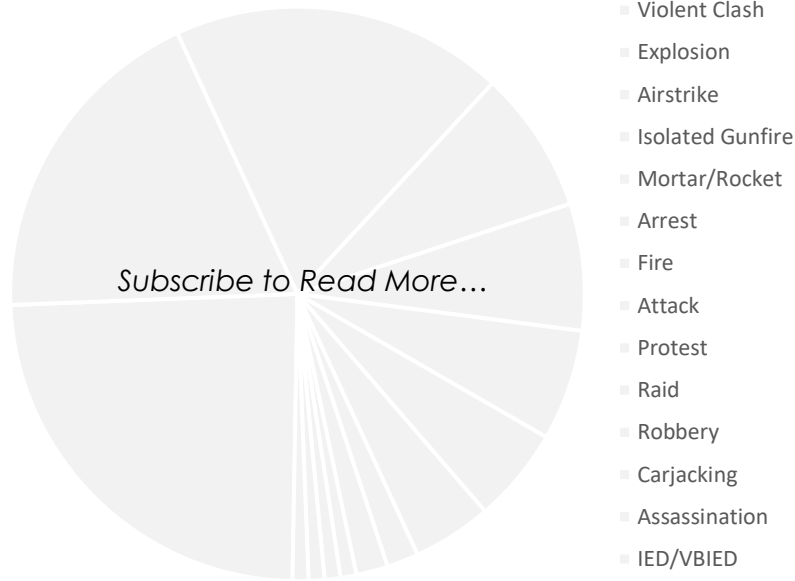
# 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Airstrikes account for highest number of fatalities followed by isolated gunfire

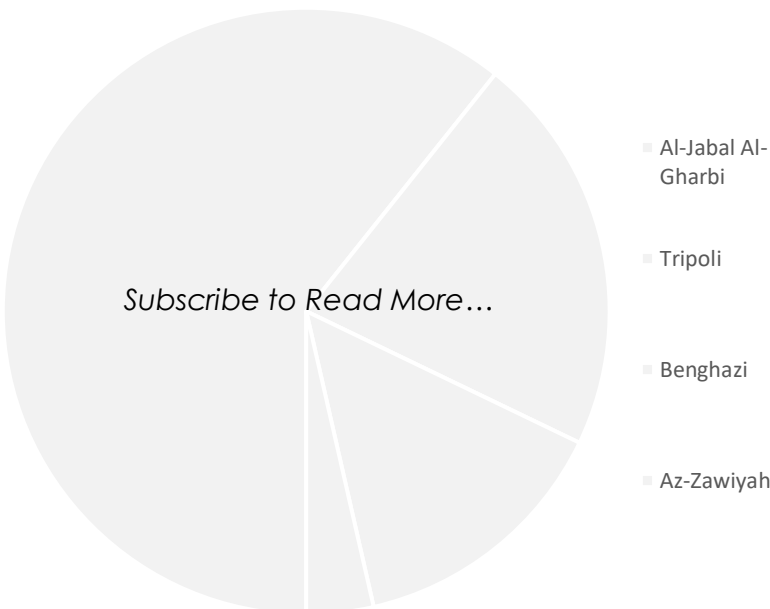
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



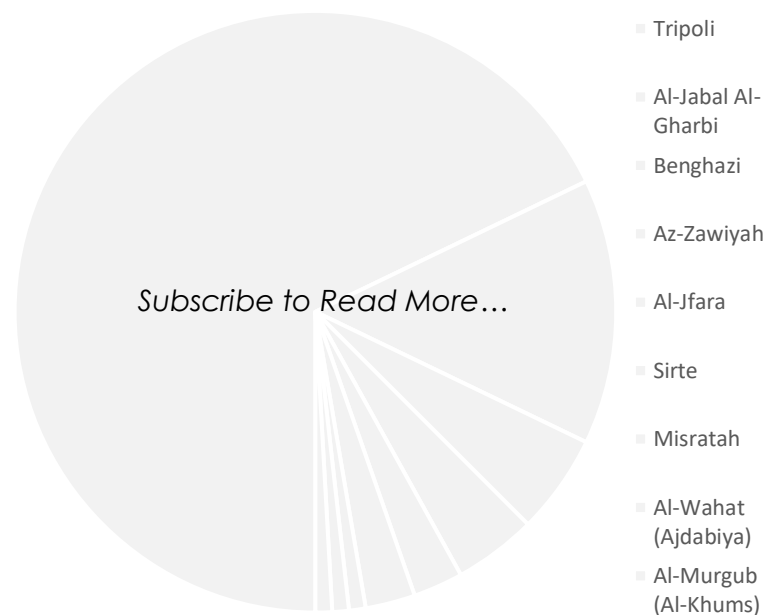
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



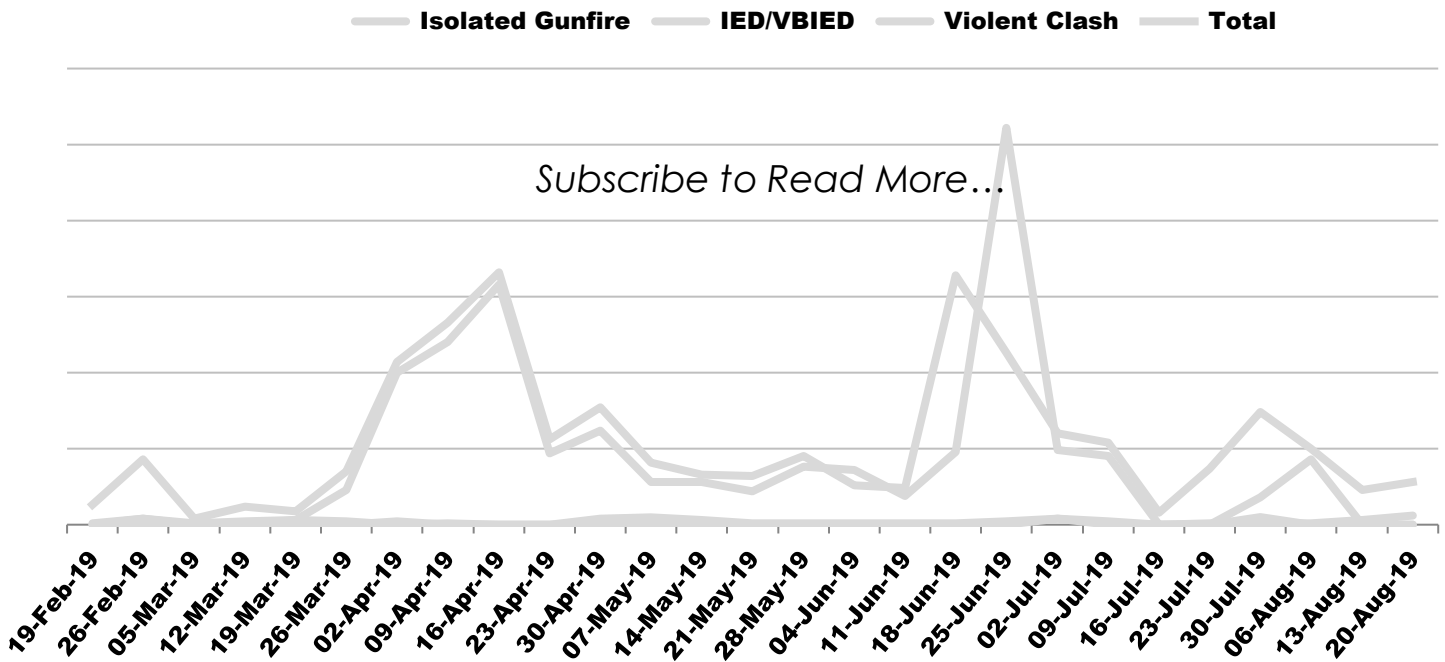
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 28 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 23 deaths reported last week and 50 the week before, marking a slight increase in the number of fatalities recorded throughout the week. The number of fatalities recorded in the Tripoli district would be relatively higher if a reliable updated casualty toll from the ongoing clashes was available. This week, airstrikes resulted in 16 fatalities, whilst the highest number of fatalities were recorded in the Al-Jabal Al-Gharbi district due to a renewed Libyan National Army (LNA) push. Similar to previous weeks, airstrikes, explosions, and violent clashes continue to account for the highest number of security incidents reported across the country. However, mortar/rocket shelling incidents have been on a downward spiral in recent weeks. Meanwhile, the number of arrests reported across the country increased due to a widened security vacuum since the outbreak of clashes in Apr. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country including 28 airstrikes, 27 violent clashes, 21 explosions heard, 21 airstrikes, 9 cases of isolated gunfire, 8 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, 7 arrests, 5 attacks, 2 protests, 2 raids, 1 robbery, 1 carjacking and 1 assassination.

In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 102 incidents, including 76 in Tripoli, marking a continued increase in contrast to the previous week. In Tripoli, WB sources reported a drive-by shooting targeting a moving vehicle on Beer Osta Milad Road, near Al-Reiada Clinic, resulted in the death of a man and the injury of another at night on 27 Aug. Separately, sources reported two gunmen driving a light green Samsung (SM5) vehicle carjacked a white Toyota Corolla in the Hay Demashq area at approximately 1430hrs on 27 Aug. Further, sources reported a group of gunmen raided a patrol positioned on highway's sidewalk near Tripoli's An Nasr Forest, where they assaulted two police members and later dumped them on the highway in the evening on 26 Aug. Beyond this, reports indicate a Sub-Saharan African laborer was found killed in the Ain Zara area in the early hours of 27 Aug. In the wider Western region, Reports indicate family members raided a house in Al- Zawiya, killing a man and wounding a brother and sister, in the early hours of 28 Aug. Initial reports indicate a local dispute erupted between two young men at night on 27 Aug, resulting in an injury. Relatives of the wounded man later raided the local's house in retaliation.

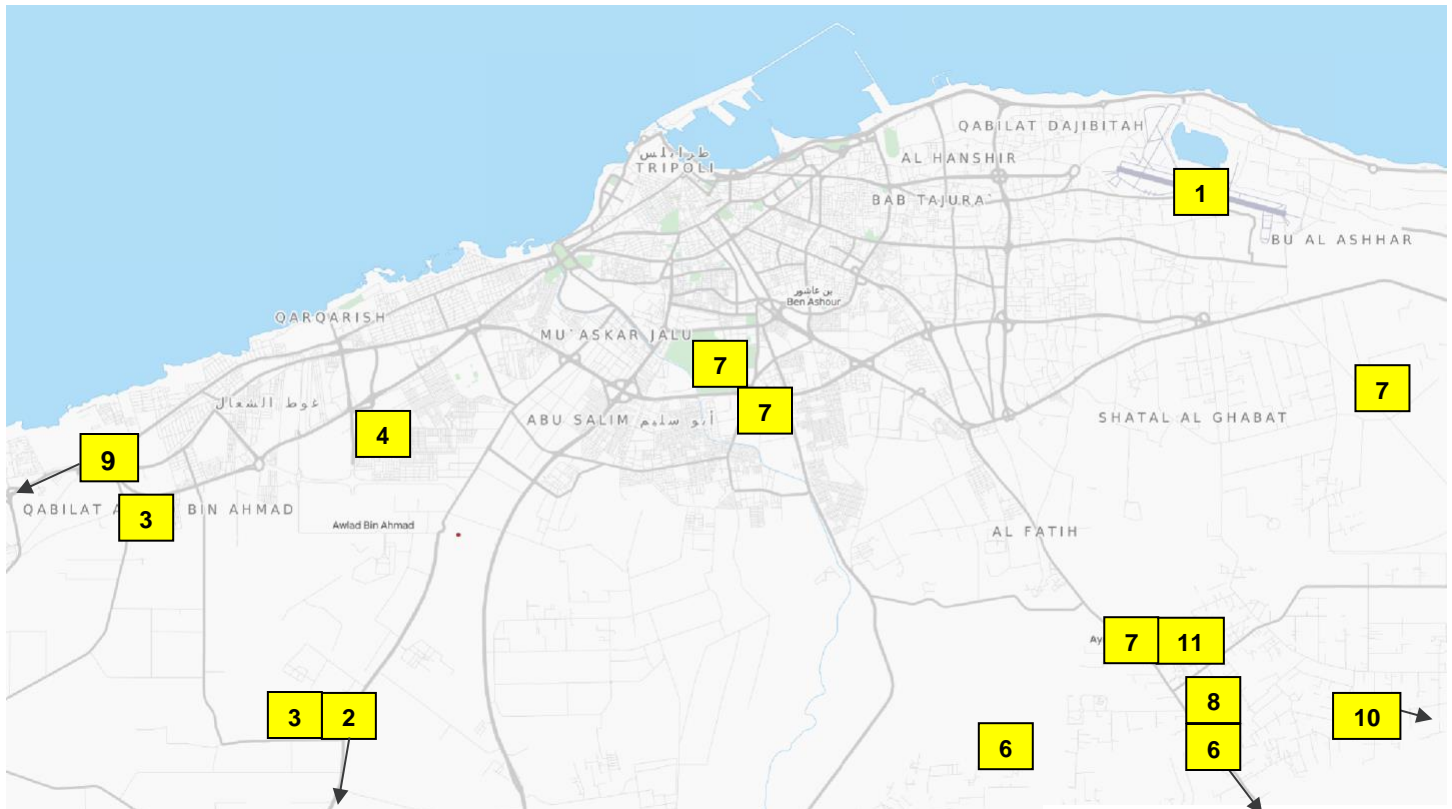
In the central region, according to Sirte's General Company for Water Services, an unidentified group sabotaged several water tanks in Sirte at night on 24 Aug. Reports indicate the perpetrators illicitly opened the water valves in Sirte's Family Entertainment and Africa City parks without the knowledge of the General Company for Water Services. The acts of sabotage resulted in waste leakages across the streets. Separately, increased security presence was reported inside Sirte and in the Qasr Abu Hadi area in response to suspicious movements of an LNA convoy South of Sirte on 31 Aug.

Turning to the Southern region, WB reported no security incidents in the region this week, though an LNA airstrike was recorded in the Murzuq area. The airstrike will be reflected in next week's data log.

In Eastern Libya, reports indicate locals erected direct barricades closing off the main entrance of the Water Utility Company in Tobruk in protest against water cuts on 28 Aug. Meanwhile, WB recorded a total of six security incidents in Benghazi throughout the reporting period, including 3 arrests, 1 body found, 1 fire and 1 case of isolated gunfire.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### MJI suspends air traffic until further notice due to shelling; militia tensions



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (23 Aug) Growing tensions between SDF & TRB after arrest of TRB member
2. (24-25 Aug) Positions unchanged; LNA airstrike in Al-Swani kills 3 civilians
3. (24 Aug) Parked vehicle stolen; gunfire heard during local dispute in Al-Serraj
4. (25 Aug) Bab Tajoura BDE leader attacked GID HQ (10 Aug) over GID-controlled database of wanted persons
5. (25 Aug) Purported document of new anti-LNA body circulates; discredited
6. (26 Aug) Clashes continue; LNA claims advances on Wadi Al-Rabei front
7. (26 – 27 Aug) Four separate sporadic security incidents reported across city
8. (27 Aug) GECOL: outlaws attack Al-Tibbah Station in Wadi Al-Rabei
9. (27 Aug) Shells launched & shots fired during Janzour CID members funeral
10. (28 Aug) LNA repels GNA attack & advances in Al-Ztarna
11. (31 Aug) LNA claims advances on Ain Zara front
12. (31 Aug) Skirmishes b/w Ghneiwa & Sumood BDE over gunfire incident

#### Shells target MJI suspending air traffic

At approximately 0100hrs on 01 Sep, sources reported indiscriminate shelling targeted MJI resulting in the suspension of air traffic and physical damage to an A-330 Libyan Airlines aircraft carrying pilgrims returning from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The GNA claimed four civilians were wounded. Initial reports indicate Al-Bugra militia's involvement. MJI remains closed as of 02 Sep. Meanwhile, the Presidential Council (PC) condemned the incident and attributed it to the LNA. The PC statement called on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to present incident findings to the UN Security Council (UNSC). In a separate incident, at approximately 0730hrs on 27 Aug, sources reported indiscriminate shelling targeted Mitiga International Airport (MJI) resulting in a temporary halt to air traffic and the diversion of some flights to Misrata International Airport (MRA). Air traffic resumed at approximately 0800hrs, with open source records documenting a Buraq Air landing at approximately 0816hrs. Separately,

#### Militia tensions

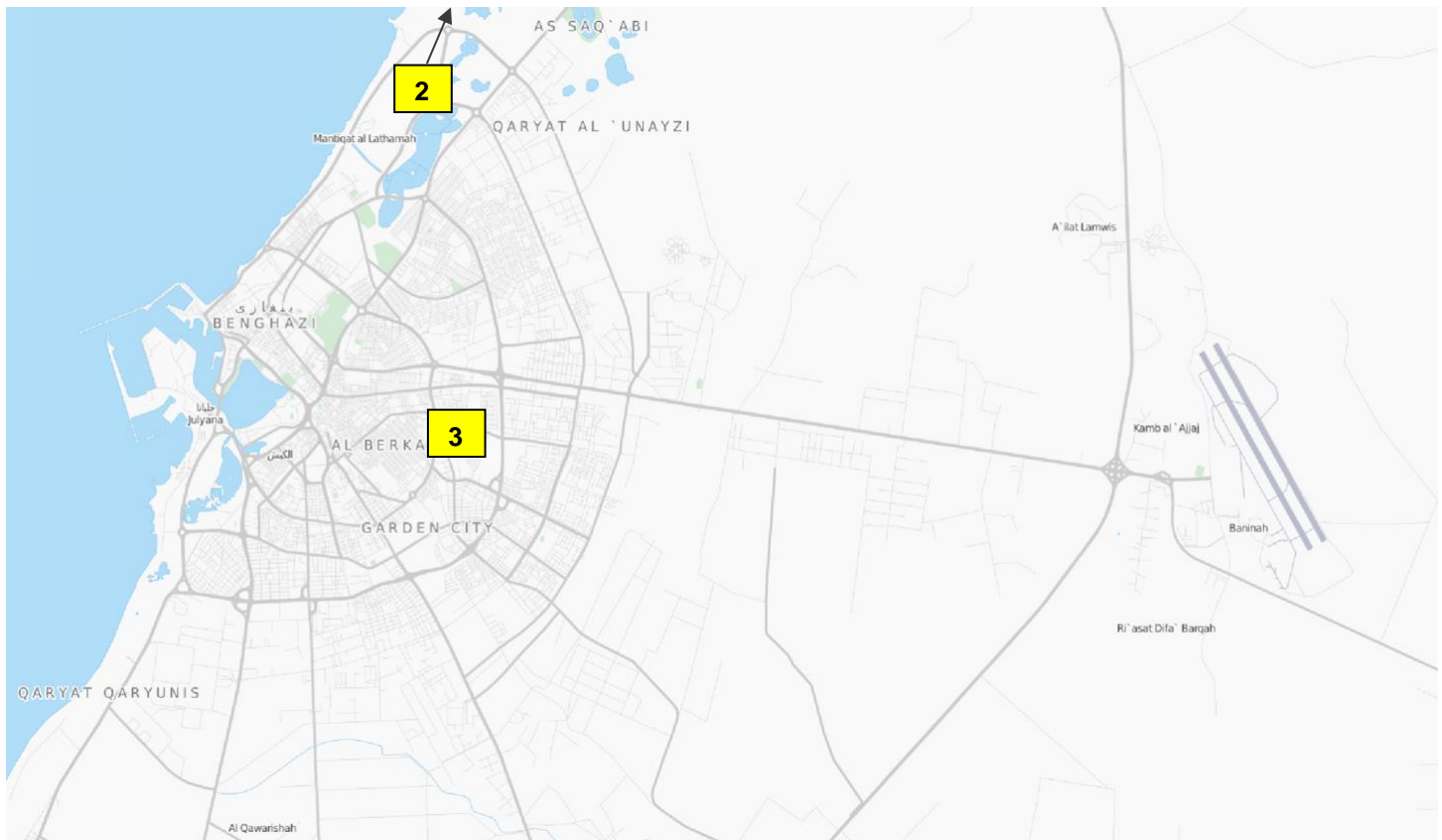
Reports suggest skirmishes erupted between Ghneiwa and Sumood Brigade militiamen between 29-31 Aug. Reports suggest the dispute and tensions between the two pro-GNA militias are related to a recent sporadic gunfire incident that resulted in the death of a man and injury of another at the Al-Ittihad Traffic Lights in the Bab Ben Ghashir area on 28 Aug. On 29 Aug, WB reported that two gunmen driving a white Toyota Hilux blocked the road in front of a van driven by two men, opening fire and kidnapping one of the injured individuals.

#### Developments on frontlines

WB sources reported Libyan National Army (LNA) advanced on the Al-Ztarna front, where heavy clashes erupted with Government of National Accord (GNA) forces on 28 Aug. GNA forces subsequently retreated towards Ghwea and Garaboli. The advance was corroborated by the LNA's Dignity Ops Room, claiming to have inflicted 20 fatalities among GNA ranks, whilst wounding 25 others. In addition, the LNA spokesperson, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, reported the arrest of five GNA forces, including two Al-Zawiya-based militia members. On 31 Aug, the LNA claimed that forces advanced on the Ain Zara front and consolidated their posture on the outskirts of Tripoli. Meanwhile, pro-LNA accounts reported large reinforcements affiliated with the LNA's 106 Brigade Groups were en route to Tarhunah.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Unconfirmed: Tariq Ibn Ziad BN raid Internal Security HQ & arrest members



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (25 Aug) Two Sudanese nationals arrested for smuggling vehicles
2. (25 Aug) Total blackout in East & disconnection of N Benghazi station
3. (26 Aug) Three Chadian nationals arrested for practicing witchcraft
4. (26 Aug) Indiscriminate gunfire results in death of football fan
5. (27 Aug) Individual in possession of narcotics & alcohol arrested
6. (27 Aug) Military Engineering Dept. dismantle over 6 tons of ERW
7. (29 Aug) Unconfirmed: Tarik Ibn Ziad BN raid IS HQ, arresting 4 members
8. (01 Sep) Municipal Guard Ops Room launch search campaign

#### Series of arrests

The General Investigation Department under Benghazi's Security Directorate arrested two Sudanese nationals involved in smuggling vehicles into Sudan on 25 Aug. The suspects, including a resident of Benghazi and Marj, were aboard a KIA Visto when captured. One of the defendants confessed to illegally trading vehicles between Libya and Sudan via Kufra Road. Separately, on 26 Aug, members of the Ras Obeida police station announced the arrest of three Chadian nationals accused of witchcraft in Benghazi. The police ambushed the suspects with the help of a Chadian woman and arrested them opposite Al-Wahda Bank in the Ruwaisat area. The suspects were allegedly seized with tools used for sorcery and later confessed to the charges. Beyond, the General Investigation Department of Benghazi's Security Directorate announced the arrest of an individual in possession of narcotics and alcohol during a surprise ambush on 27 Aug.

#### Unconfirmed raid on Internal Security HQ

Unconfirmed reports suggest LNA-affiliated Tarik Ibn Ziad battalion militiamen raided the Internal Security (IS) HQ in Benghazi, kidnapping/arresting four IS members. Conflicting reports suggest the four IS individuals were suspected of preparing to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the former Gaddafi regime, which falls on 01 Sep 2019.

No further information available. Separately, reports indicate the LNA-affiliated Tariq Bin Ziad Battalion established several checkpoints and patrols in Benghazi to prevent locals from celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the former Gaddafi regime's 1st September Revolution.

#### Indiscriminate gunfire

Reports indicate indiscriminate gunfire resulted in the death of a 26-year-old Al-Nasr football club fan while participating in the celebration of his team's victory on 26 Aug.

#### ERW removed

Local reports indicate the LNA-affiliated Military Engineering Department dismantled over 6 tons of explosive remnants of war (ERW), including howitzer shells and mines connected by wires across all areas of Benghazi, in an isolated desert area in Benghazi on 27 Aug. The ERW were previously laid by militant groups prior to the liberation of Benghazi in 2017.

#### Municipal Guard launch search campaign

The Municipal Guard's Operations Room in Benghazi launched a search campaign to carry out arrests targeting violators across different areas of the city on 01 Sep. The search campaign was ordered by Benghazi's Municipal Guard head, Saleh Al-Kadiki, to comb the fifth and fourth ring road, and the Saleh Road in the initial phase, and then move to the remaining areas across Benghazi in the coming days.

## 6. What's next Renewed LNA attempt to seize Gharyan

### POLITICAL FORECAST

The UN Secretary General's (UNSG) report to the Security Council is expected to generate criticism and receive backlash from both GNA and LNA factions in the short term. Looking ahead, 2020 budget discussions will take centre stage and are guaranteed to escalate tensions between the GNA's Ministry of Finance, the Audit Bureau, and other eastern-based government institutions. Locally, the LNA head, Khalifa Haftar, received a delegation of elders and dignitaries from Ash Shwayrif at his Al-Rajma HQ on 28 Aug. Reports indicate the delegation reaffirmed their support for the LNA and its "war on terrorism and armed criminal gangs". Meanwhile, some reports alleged Haftar visited Moscow between 20 Aug - 24 Aug. Internationally, G7 Members called for an international conference bringing together all stakeholders and regional actors relevant to the conflict in Libya after concluding the G7 summit in Biarritz, France, on 26 Aug. Unconfirmed reports suggest there will be a Libyan conference bringing together national powerbrokers and a second international summit on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Further, the White House reported a meeting between US president Donald Trump, and his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, where the two sides discussed the crisis in Libya. Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland met with GNA Deputy PM Ahmed Maiteeg on 30 Aug. According to a US Embassy statement, the two discussed economic reforms and "the need to de-escalate the conflict and for all parties to return to a UN-led political dialogue". Separately, the Kremlin stated Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed the Libyan file and a peaceful resolution to the crisis over the phone, among other bilateral issues.

### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In a *Military Times* article, Diana Stancy Correll and Kyle Rempfer explore US Africa Command's (AFRICOM) key objectives in Libya after the introductory meeting between new AFRICOM commander Gen. Stephen Townsend, US Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland, and GNA PM Fayez Sarraj in Tunis on 26 Aug. The article reads "The ongoing fighting and conflict in Libya has the potential to give existing terrorist elements in Libya oxygen," AFRICOM spokesman Air Force Col. Chris Karns said in an email to *Military Times*. "This is a situation that is being carefully monitored. Intensified and inclusive dialogue is occurring to work toward a political solution." Karns said the chaos exhibited in Libya "presents an opportunity for terror groups to recruit, conduct some basic training and survive," adding that evidence suggests these efforts are occurring. In response to threats from these groups, AFRICOM conducted six airstrikes in Libya last year and seven in 2017 as part of counter-terrorism operations. But Karns said no airstrikes have been conducted in 2019 because the terrorist threat was "considerably degraded" prior to tensions escalating in Libya in the spring. But a military strike still remains an option, Karns said, in the event that terror groups regenerate and present additional threats. "We won't discuss circumstances or situations that merit an airstrike because we don't want to give terror groups any advantage," Karns said. On AFRICOM's presence in Libya, the article quoted Karns saying "When conditions merit a return, we won't look to signal numbers or capabilities to violent extremist organizations wishing to do harm".

### SECURITY FORECAST

Celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of former Gaddafi regime's 1st September Revolution went ahead across some towns, including Bani Walid, with no security incidents reported. The celebrations serve as a clear indicator of the sizeable former regime supporter base in/outside Libya. Meanwhile, Tripoli's frontlines could see an uptick in engagement after the slowdown reported between 30 Aug and 02 Sep. Video footage published by "The Libyan Address" purported to document a Turkish unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in Tripoli's Mitiga International Airport (MJI), could expose the airport to further LNA targeting. An LNA airstrike while MJI is closed for commercial flights would avoid civilian exposure. Meanwhile, inter-militia tensions could also resurface, including between pro-Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) groups and Tripoli-based militias. In addition, on-the-ground reports indicate a widening rift between fighting factions, irrespective of their affiliation, due to the GNA's decision-making and governance. Multiple pro-LIFG elements have voiced their anger at the GNA, accusing the Tripoli-based government of not providing enough funding and not being resolute in its objective to repel LNA forces. The controversial pro-LIFG mufti, Sadiq Gharyani, echoed similar views and urged fighters to rally under a joint force called the "Revolutionary Protection Force". In Gharyan, LNA forces are expected to renew their offensive on the town from the South, especially given the latest reports of an LNA mobilization from the town of Asbi'ah. In the central region, the pro-GNA Sirte Protection Force (SPF) will continue to be on high alert after recording LNA movements in the Sirte district. Meanwhile, West of Tripoli, the possibility for tensions to escalate in Sabrataha, Surman, and/or Zawiya is corroborated by unconfirmed reports of a tense security environment in the area.

### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

UN Secretary General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres presented his report to the UN Security Council (UNSC) on 26 Aug. The report was published on 29 Aug and contains a comprehensive overview of the Libyan situation. In the report, Guterres refers to the eastern-based interim government as the "defunct" government and criticized its interference in local municipal elections in Sabha. More importantly, the UNSG warned "that, unless action is taken in the near term, it is highly likely that the current conflict will escalate into full civil war." The report also recommended that the United Nations Support Mission in Libya's (UNSMIL) mandate be extended for an additional 12 months. In the report, Guterres described the current situation in Libya as "deeply alarming". In addition, the report emphasized the importance of enforcing the arms embargo: "A political solution to the Libyan conflict requires the full and united support of the international community. I am concerned by the presence of foreign fighters and mercenaries being employed by parties to the conflict in Libya as well as by the influx of weapons to the country. I remind Member States of their obligations not to sell or supply arms to Libya, and I call upon them to implement all measures related to the arms embargo, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2473 (2019). The full implementation of the arms embargo is paramount for the protection of civilians and the restoration of security and stability in Libya and the region". Separately, on the counterterrorism front, Guterres noted a significant increase in IS activity during the reporting period: "ISIL claimed responsibility for attacks near the southern villages of Fuqaha', on 8 April and 3 June, and Ghudwa, on 25 March and 9 May. ISIL also claimed attacks on a Libyan National Army military camp in Sabhah on 4 May and on a military checkpoint in Zillah on 18 May. From 12 to 15 June, clashes were reported between ISIL and local units of the Libyan National Army in the Haruj desert area, east of Sabhah."

# About Whispering Bell



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