



# 1. The Big Picture

## US weighs in on Moscow's interference; a prelude to de-escalation

The week was marked by temporary Libyan National Army (LNA) advances over Government of National Accord (GNA) forces in Salah Eddien, Hadba Al-Mashroo, and South of Garabolli. LNA spokesperson Ahmed Al-Mesmari stated GNA forces were dealt a blow and that PM Fayez Serraj "is in serious trouble".

But more importantly, the US Department of State issued a joint statement on US-Libya Security Dialogue, directly addressing the LNA and calling for an end to the offensive on Tripoli, in the strongest statement from Washington since the conflict began. This action on the diplomatic front comes in response to growing Russian mercenary involvement in support of the LNA. Some Government of National Accord (GNA) figures rejoiced at the statement and viewed it as a strong sign of support, especially after last week's calls for more US involvement. However, there is no indication this is the case. What it does show is that the end of combat operations is nearing and will be gradually replaced by political negotiations.

First, the US statement is far from a direct endorsement of the GNA, though it does draw a red line and could deter, at least in the short term, the LNA's foreign backers from doubling down on their support and pursuing further gains. The statement establishes a benchmark and could be viewed as a warning from the US that it will not tolerate further hostilities beyond this point, and that actors should now aim towards de-escalation.

Another caveat to consider when reading the statement is that it is difficult to ascertain whether it is reflective of a position widely-shared by the White House and other departments within the Trump administration. Of note, a phone call in April 2019 between US President Donald Trump with LNA commander Khalifa Haftar was widely interpreted as support for the latter.

Meanwhile, the LNA's response has come in the form of a military escalation across frontlines, increasing skepticism among GNA field commanders that Haftar's forces will continue fighting regardless of the US statement. However, this LNA escalation is not an indication that it is ignoring Washington's warning. On the contrary, it represents more of a last-ditch effort as the LNA realizes that it is now pressed for time before sitting at the negotiating table.

The LNA's political plans remain shrouded in secrecy, but there are emerging signs it is now more open to negotiations and is only working to weaken the GNA's

position and negotiating leverage so as to obtain a favourable outcome that secures its interests. In the aftermath of the US statement, the LNA's military escalation does not reduce the prospect of a negotiated settlement. Haftar's forces are making a concerted push precisely because conventional wisdom dictates that a ceasefire should precede negotiations. In other words, the statement has only set the tempo for the LNA as the countdown to negotiations begins.

Politically, there are internal divisions within the eastern camp over the roadmap and course of action in the medium term. The main point of contention is over the choice of a candidate to lead this unity government. The second issue is related to timing and whether a unity government should be formed before or after the "liberation" of Tripoli. Some eastern House of Representatives (HoR) members argue that if a unity government is formed under current circumstances, it would enable Islamists to retain power. Meanwhile, some eastern HoR members rejected unification attempts as they don't want to share a seat with Tripoli-based HoR members. From the LNA's perspective, a unity government is only possible if it is pro-LNA and does not include pro-GNA members.

Overall, there is mounting evidence to suggest Libya's conflict is now gradually moving from the frontlines on Tripoli's outskirts to the negotiating table(s). Nevertheless, seven months later, this new political fight is not without its challenges. Negotiations will likely highlight divisions within political actors that were previously united by their support for the LNA or GNA in this offensive. Historic tensions could resurface, including between the eastern-based interim government, the HoR, and the LNA. Of note, a meeting reportedly took place between the HoR head Aguila Saleh and Haftar in the UAE.

As the prospect of a negotiated settlement continues to grow, so too will local perceptions of foreign interference and meddling among Gaddafi supporters and the silent majority in Libya. The head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Ghassan Salame, will likely continue to face challenges in obtaining the buy-in of local factions ahead of the Berlin Conference.

### KEY POINTS

- US statement delineates boundaries for LNA
- LNA escalation indicates pressure to deliver
- Divisions in the East over political framework



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## 2. National Security Map

IS appearing weak in new allegiance to Al-Baghdadi's successor; Al-Kaniat/GNA tensions in Garaboli

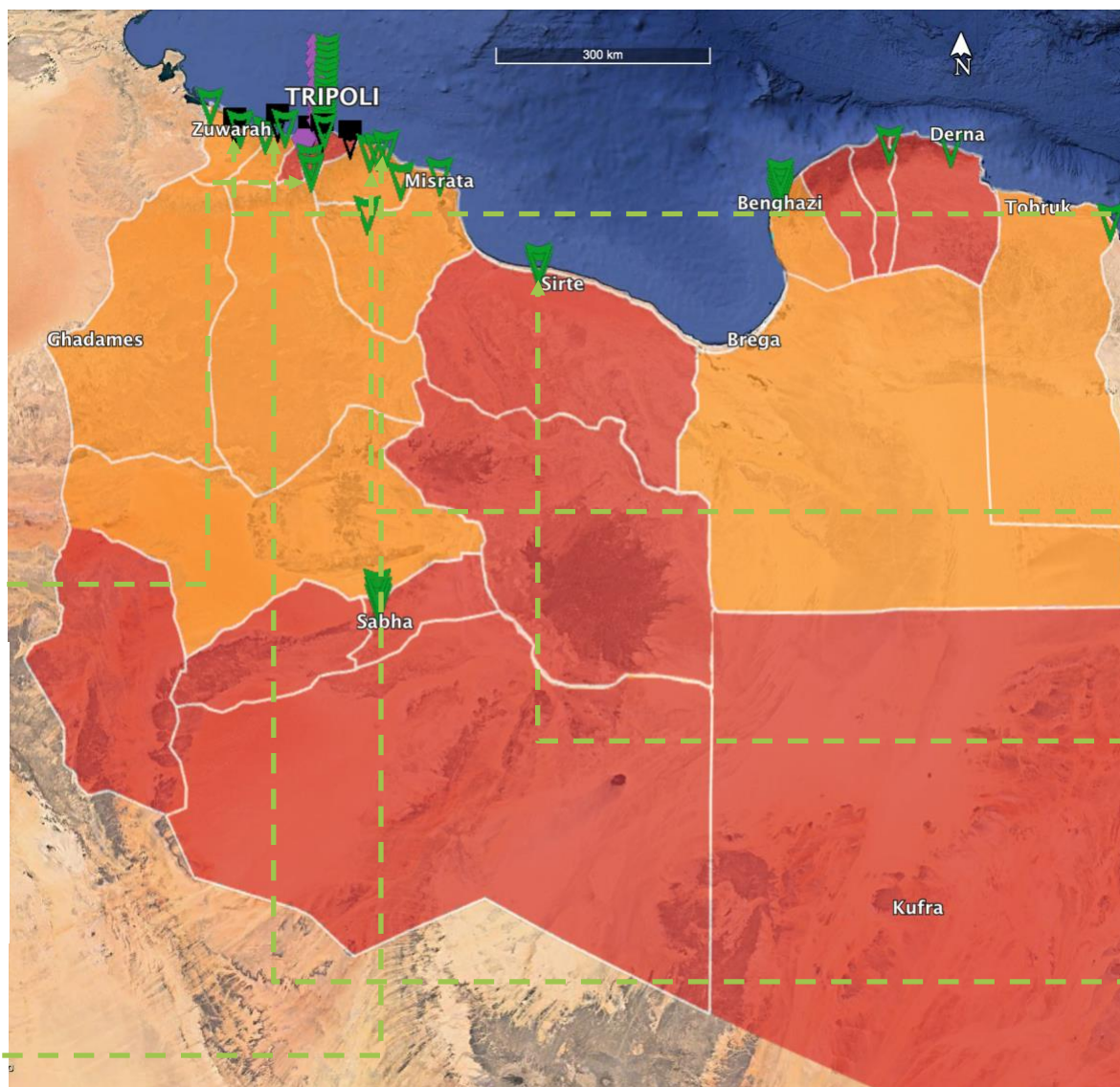
### Key

#### THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

#### EVENT INDICATORS

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



Reports indicate heavy sporadic gunfire heard, coinciding with the closure of several shops, in Al-Jmail in the afternoon on 14 Nov. Initial reports indicate GNA forces led by Western Region commander Osama Juwaili were preparing to attack the LNA-controlled Al-Watiyah Airbase, south of Al-Jmail. The attack has failed to materialise on the ground to date.

GNA forces arrested/kidnapped over 40 Tarhuna locals on the Jahawat Road, linking Khoms with Msallata, in the evening on 13 Nov. In a probable act of retaliation, reports indicate Tarhuna's Al-Kaniat militia reached Garaboli's Coastal Road and used anti-aircraft vehicles to open fire on GNA positions under the Garaboli bridge in the early hours of 14 Nov. Initial unconfirmed reports allege indiscriminate gunfire hit a civilian vehicle resulting in the death of three family members.

The LNA's Dignity Operations Room confirmed airstrikes targeting GNA-aligned militia positions in Sirte, including Qardhabiya Airbase and Al-Saadi camp, allegedly used for controlling and operating unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and additional military equipment on 13 Nov.

Unidentified gunmen carjacked a lorry on Zawiya's Coastal Road, specifically at Al-Qardhabiya Traffic Lights, at approximately 1200hrs on 12 Nov. Initial reports indicate the driver was kidnapped and taken to the Beer Terfas area. The driver was later released following negotiations between the kidnappers and the victim's family in Surman.

LNA units reportedly kidnapped an elderly person and sheikh of Al-Rgaat tribe in Al-Heera at night on 11 Nov. There is no further information available.

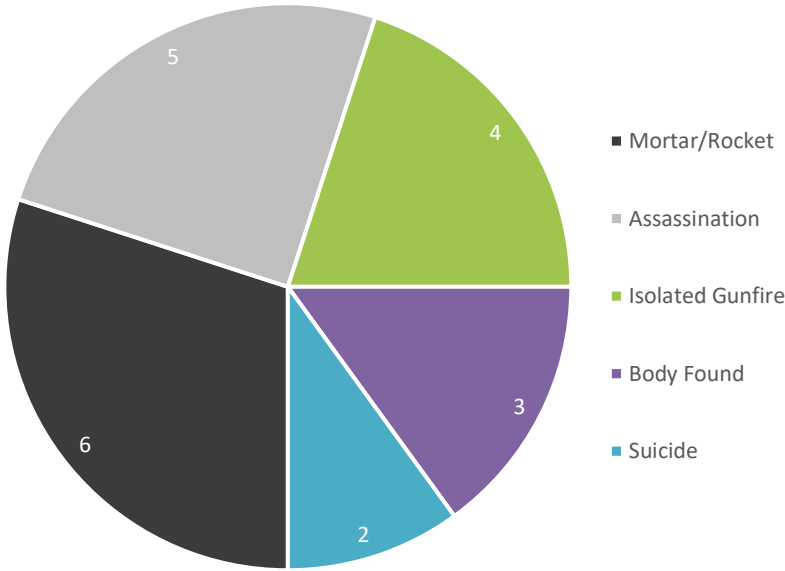
On 15 Nov, Islamic State (IS)-affiliated media platforms released images of IS Libya province pledging allegiance to their new global leader, Abu Ibrahim Al-Hashemi Al-Qurashi, in addition to the group's new spokesman, Abu Hamza Al-Qurashi, following the recent death of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. The images show three separate locations with eight militants on average, corroborating the group's limited reach and weak posture in Libya in 2019, relatively compared with 2016-2018.

Unidentified assailants threw a hand grenade in front of the Khoms Security Directorate's main gate in the morning on 15 Nov. The attack resulted in material damage to the building's walls and a number of vehicles belonging to the directorate's staff. No casualties were recorded.

# 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Uptick in fatalities from shelling; number of recorded airstrikes down 66%

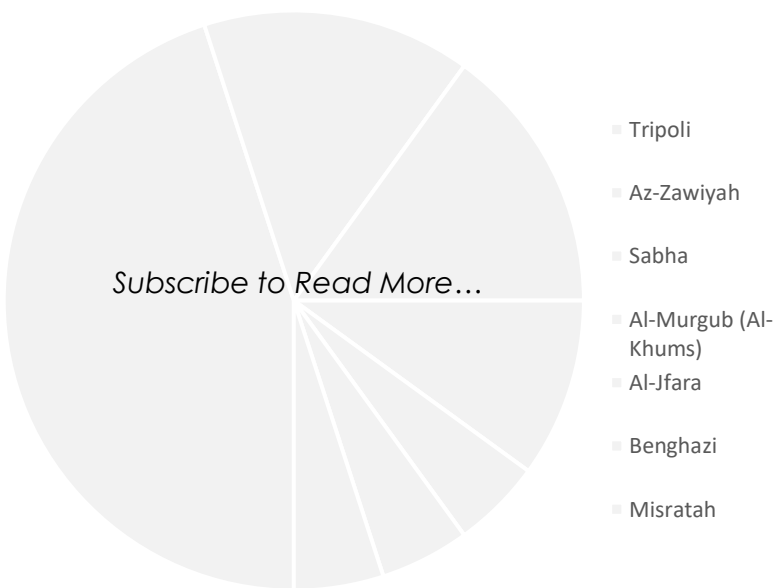
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



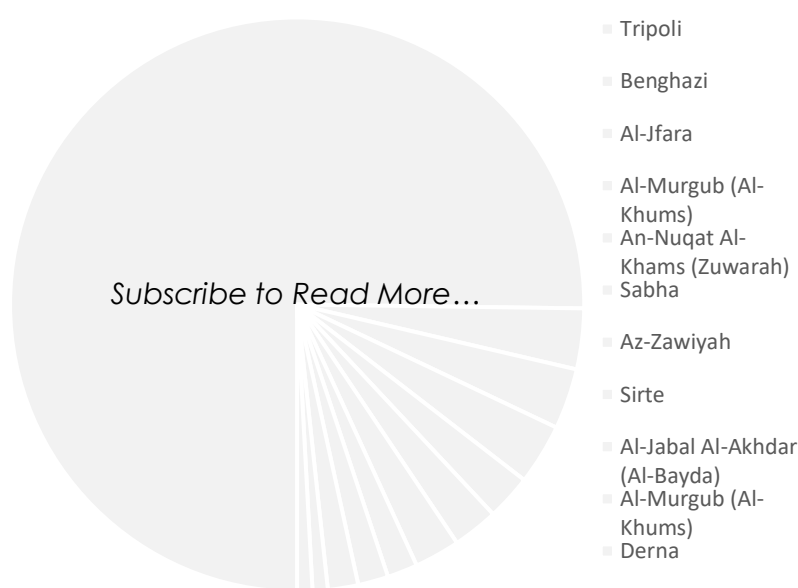
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



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 20 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 35 deaths reported last week and 13 the week before. The total number of nationwide fatalities would likely be significantly higher if a reliable casualty toll of the ongoing clashes in the Western region was available. This week, the highest number of fatalities came as a result of mortar/rocket shelling incidents in Southern Tripoli, resulting in six civilian casualties. Meanwhile, WB recorded five assassinations throughout the reporting period, including three in the Western region and two in the Southern city of Sabha. In contrast to the absence of isolated gunfire incidents last week, four fatalities were recorded in the Western region as a result of gunfire, including three militiamen and a civilian. In a continuing pattern since combat operations began in early Apr, military activity including airstrikes, violent clashes and mortar/rocket shelling incidents continue to be recorded in the Tripoli district, with an increase in mortar/rocket shelling incidents and a significant decrease in airstrikes recorded this week, likely because of poor weather conditions that limited the number of LNA sorties. Of note, recent weeks have been dominated by LNA Air Force (LAAF) airstrikes. Several security incidents were recorded throughout the country including 27 mortar/rocket shelling incidents, 23 violent clashes, 21 explosions, 10 airstrikes, 8 arrests, 8 isolated gunfire cases, 5 assassinations, 3 kidnappings, 3 protests and carjackings.

In Western Libya, WB recorded a total of 104 incidents, including 88 in Tripoli, marking a relative increase. In Tripoli, heavy explosions were heard in Salah Eddien coinciding with a shell landing on a house in the Airport Road area at approximately 0200hrs on 09 Nov. Initial reports indicate three family members were wounded. Separately, an indiscriminate shell landed on a house resulting in the death of two men in Khallat Al-Furjan at approximately 2300hrs on 10 Nov. Initial reports indicate the victims were visiting their abandoned house after being displaced. Beyond, an indiscriminate shell landed on a house in Salah Eddien resulting in the death of a man and the injury of his family member at approximately 0400hrs on 14 Nov. In the wider Western region, reports indicate clashes erupted between two local militias resulting in three fatalities in Zawiya's Al-Harsha area at night on 10 Nov. Conflicting reports emerged over the motive behind the clashes. Some reports suggest one of the militiamen kidnapped a member of "Al-Esnad Force" also known as "Al-Far militia" led by Mohammed Bahroun dubbed "Al-Far", in the morning. Later that day, Al-Far militia bombed the kidnapper's family residence in Al-Harsha area, resulting in the death of the kidnapper and two other men. Meanwhile, other reports suggest a dispute between militiamen resulted in a militiaman firing gunshots in the air as he threatened an employee of the Zawiya Passports Office. Separately, reports indicate a young man was killed in Misrata in the evening on 07 Nov. Initial reports indicate the killer handed himself over to Al Ghiran police station. No further information available.

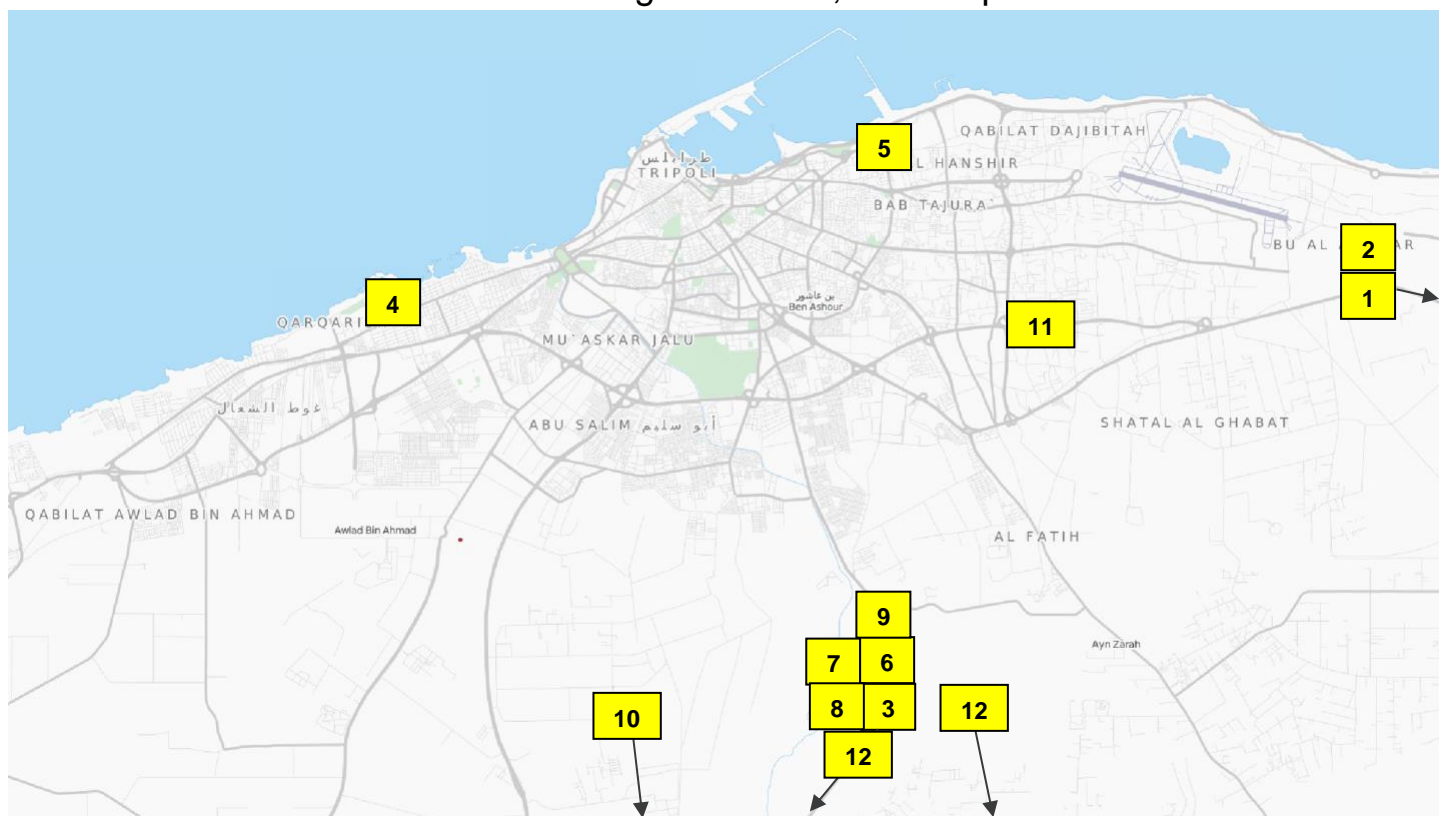
In the central region, the LNA's Dignity Operations Room confirmed LAAF airstrikes targeting GNA-aligned militias in Sirte, including the targeting of Qardhabiya Airbase and Al-Saadi camp, allegedly used for controlling and operating unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and additional military equipment in the early hours of 13 Nov.

Turning to the South, WB recorded 3 security incidents in the Sabha district, including 2 assassinations and a suicide. Reports indicate an elderly man was found killed on a road between Sabha and Brak in the evening on 09 Nov. There is no further information available. Separately, reports indicate a local dispute resulted in the death of a man in Sabha's Al-Gharda area in the evening on 08 Nov. No further information available.

In the East, WB recorded 8 security incidents, including 2 arrests, a body found, and a stabbing in Benghazi. Meanwhile, Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar's Anti-Illegal Immigration unit seized 20 suitcases laden with landmines at the Therwa Gate on Al-Beida's outskirts on 13 Nov. The members reported that a local resident of the Tamimi area, driving a Toyota Camry, was seized with landmines containing dangerous explosive material extracted from desert area extending from Ain Al-Ghazal Gate to the road linking Tobruk's 200 Gate. No further information available.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### Civilians flee as shelling intensifies; MJI suspends four routes



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (09 Nov) Boy's body recovered from well after six days of rescue operations
2. (10 Nov) Man shot dead on road between Tajoura and Garaboli
3. (10 Nov) LNA repels GNA attack on Sog Al-Khmies Emsihel area
4. (10 Nov) Students protest exam results in front of National Examination Centre
5. (11 Nov) Gunmen raid LTT HQ and detain company's chairman
6. (12 Nov) Hai Azzohour residents flee after alleged GNA evacuation deadline
7. (13 Nov) GNA-aligned militias kidnap man from East in Salah Eddien
8. (13-14 Nov) Indiscriminate shelling dominates frontlines; inc. Salah Eddien
9. (13 Nov) Hai Azzohour residents return in fear of house robberies
10. (15 Nov) LNA advance in Hadba Mashro; GNA retreat near Hamza Camp
11. (15 Nov) GNA militiamen fire shots & insult driver following traffic accident
12. (15 Nov) Gunmen establish CP between Wadi Al-Rabei & Sidi Sayeh

#### Gunmen raid LTT HQ & detain chairman

WB sources reported unidentified gunmen raided the Libya Telecom and Technology Company (LTT) HQ in Abu Sittah and detained its Chairman in the evening on 11 Nov. Initial reports indicate the Chairman's tenure expired, though he refused to hand over his position despite his replacement being agreed upon. Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports allege Ghneiwa militia carried out the arrest. In response, the Presidential Council (PC) head, Fayez Al-Serraj, called on the Attorney General's Office and Interior Ministry to launch a probe into the attack. The latter came after the LTT chairman reportedly filed a complaint to the PC indicating that an armed group, claiming affiliation to the Interior Ministry's Special Operation Force, raided the company's HQ, assaulted the chairman, and detained him for 24 hrs. The identity of the gunmen remains unknown.

#### Sporadic security incidents

WB sources reported sporadic gunfire in the Souq Al Jum'aa area at approximately 2200hrs on 15 Nov. Initial reports indicate two GNA-aligned militiamen driving a military ambulance opened fire in front of Al-Sahel Sweets on 20 Ramadan Road, after a civilian vehicle accidentally hit their ambulance. The militiamen verbally insulted the driver, who was an elderly man, and fired sporadic shots into the air. No casualties were recorded. Separately, sources reported masked gunmen driving a Hyundai Verna with tinted windows, temporarily established a fake checkpoint on a road between Wadi Al-Rabei and Sidi Al-Sayeh at approximately 1700hrs on 15 Nov

There is no further information available, though financially motivated crime remains common at fake CPs. Further, sources reported GNA-aligned militias kidnapped a man from his residence in the Salah Eddien area in the early hours of 13 Nov. Initial reports indicate the man is originally from the Eastern region and works in the media sector. There is no further information available, though WB recorded an uptick in politically-motivated kidnappings/arrests fuelled by suspected LNA/GNA affiliation.

#### MJI: flights to/from Jordan/Egypt suspended

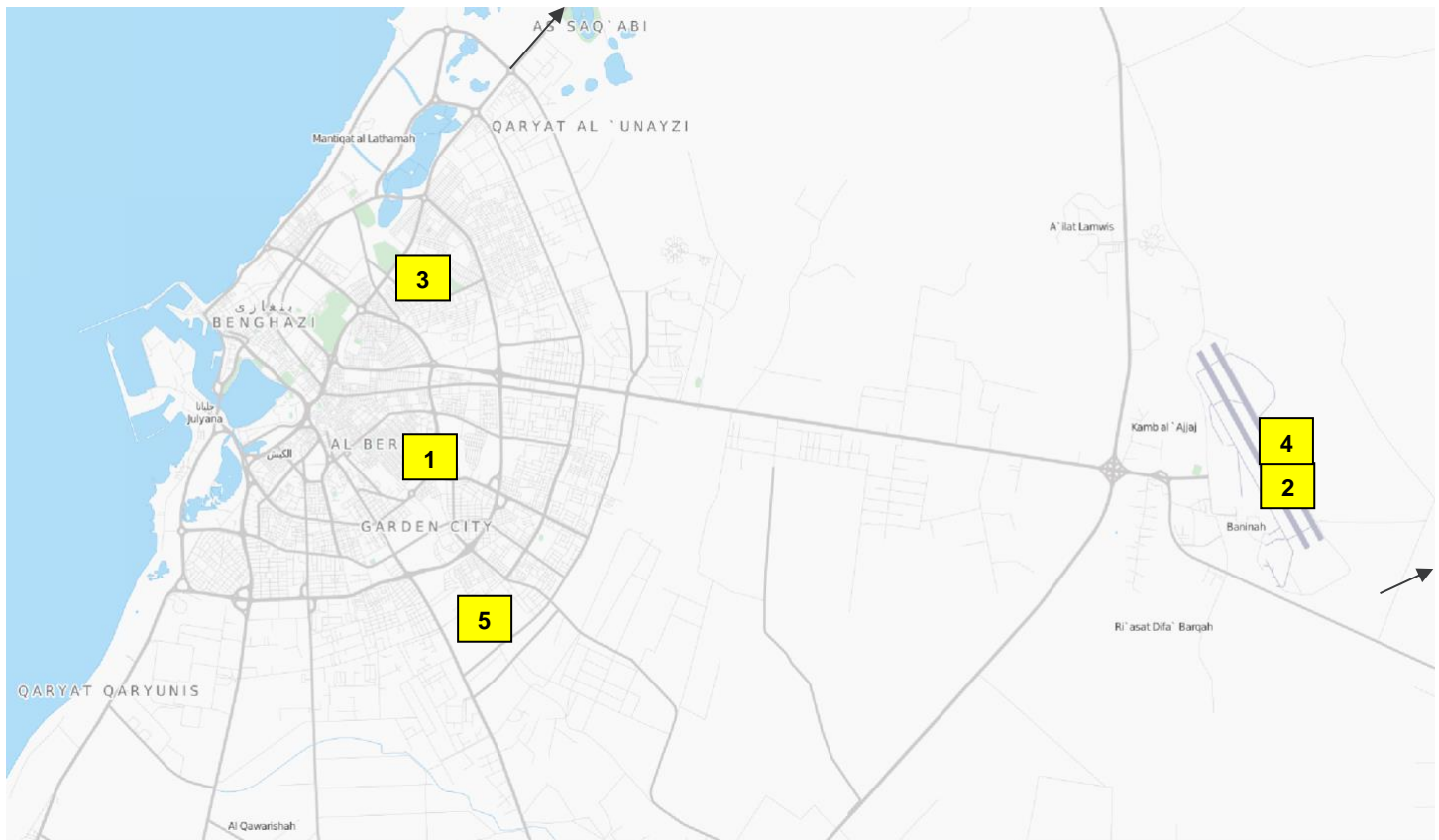
On 15 Nov, Mitiga International Airport's (MJI) management announced the temporary suspension of flights to and from Amman, Jordan, and Alexandria, Egypt, in response to the decision issued by the Libyan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) of the Interim Government, ordering flights from MJI and Misrata International Airport (MRA), bound for Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, to stop-over at Benina International Airport (BEN) to complete security and customs procedures on 14 Nov. MJI attributed the decision to the time wasted stopping over at BEN, loss of fuel, increasing travellers' fatigue, as well as other motives. The decision would come after a Libyan Airlines-operated aircraft departing from MRA, bound for Amman, was forced to land at BEN, according to the GNA's Ministry of Transport.

#### Boy's body recovered from well

Tripoli's National Safety Authority recovered the body of a seven-year-old boy from a well after six consecutive days of rescue operations in Tajoura on 09 Nov. The child's parents reported him missing to authorities on 21 Oct.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Sit-in protest suspended at BEN; Libyan Airlines flight forced to land at BEN



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (10 Nov) Drug dealer arrested in front of residence in Al-Majouri
2. (11 Nov) Benina International Airport general manager suspends sit-in
3. (12 Nov) Employee stabbed on duty resulting in suspension of work
4. (14 Nov) Libyan Airlines-operated flight from MRA stops over at BEN
5. (16 Nov) Sudanese man arrested for killing fellow countryman
6. (16 Nov) Palestinian woman found after reported missing for one year

#### Series of arrests

Benghazi's General Directorate of Criminal Investigation announced that a Sudanese man was arrested approximately one hour after killing another Sudanese man in the Buhdima area on 16 Nov. Security forces arrested the suspect upon his attempt to escape. There are no further details available. Separately, Benghazi's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested a drug dealer involved in the trade of cannabis resin (hash) in front of his residence in Al-Majouri area on 10 Nov. The suspect attempted to escape as he was ambushed trading narcotics in front of his residence. Following interrogations, the suspect confessed to the charges and stated he had escaped prison in 2011.

#### Employee stabbed on duty

Benghazi's Passport, Nationality and Foreigners Affairs Department announced the suspension of work after one of its employees, identified as Khaled Al-Ajili, was stabbed whilst on duty 12 Nov. There is no further information available. Separately, reports indicate a man's body was found in Al-Hawari area in the morning on 12 Nov. There is no further information available.

#### Benina Airport GM suspends sit-in

Benina International Airport's (BEN) General Manager, Abdallah Al-Shafei, announced the

suspension of the sit-in organized by airport management on 11 Nov. Al-Shafei noted that an extensive meeting resulted in the establishment of a committee tasked with addressing staff demands. BEN's administration announced a strike by airport staff and the subsequent suspension of the airport's various departments starting from the morning of 11 Nov. The statement came after the Airport Authority affiliated with the Eastern-based Interim Government, rejected Al-Shafei's resignation.

#### Libyan Airlines aircraft forced to land at BEN

A Libyan Airlines-operated aircraft departing from MRA and bound for Amman was forced to land at BEN, according to the GNA's Ministry of Transport. In a statement, the latter condemned what it referred to as the "irresponsible behaviour of the illegal CAA forcing Libyan Airlines flight number (LN282), carrying 105 passengers aboard, to land at BEN" on 14 Nov. The Ministry added that the incident resulted in delays and the suffering of travellers, particularly the elderly and sick. Reports indicate MRA flights to/from Amman and Alexandria will remain suspended until alternative routes are provided.



## 6. What's next

### LNA last-ditch push; eastern political effort to lure Gaddafi supporters

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

Although developments are now pointing towards an imminent round of negotiations, a date to convene the Berlin Conference is yet to be set. Instead, observers suggest Berlin will be delayed until 2020 and Libya will next be discussed in Rome at the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of Mediterranean Dialogues, where UNSMIL's Ghassan Salame, Russia's Sergey Lavrov, Italy's Giuseppe Conte, and others are all scheduled attend. Analysts are of the view that backchannel negotiations have already borne fruit and that these official meetings will help formalize agreements. Salame did, however, reveal in an interview further details on the Berlin Conference's main objectives, which include a return to the political process, ceasefire terms, implementation of a UNSC resolution to prevent the flow of arms into Libya, the revival of the economic reform programme, security arrangements across Tripoli, and the application of international humanitarian law principles. For its part, the GNA continues to manoeuvre on the political front, announcing a 40% decrease in ministers's compensations, including GNA PM Fayez Al-Serraj's salary, in addition to a 30% decrease in the salaries of advisers, taking effect from 01 Jan 2020. This was widely described as a measure of last resort to rescue the GNA's ailing popularity. Internationally, Russian president Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Libya without preconditions in a phone call on 11 Nov. According to reports, Putin hailed Germany's mediation efforts aimed at resuming the political process in search of a peaceful solution.

#### SECURITY FORECAST

The LNA is expected to attempt a last-ditch effort to push northward, an assessment corroborated by the reported arrival of additional Russian private military contractors (PMCs), with some allegedly equipped with precision-guided munition. On the frontlines, artillery and shelling have gradually replaced airstrikes and residents are now being asked to evacuate as engagement areas expanded northward, particularly in the vicinity of Salah Eddien. This highlights the gradual shift in the theatre towards close combat. Reports indicate indiscriminate shelling is frequently conducted overnight, where rockets land behind frontlines in civilian areas. As a result, a new wave of internationally displaced persons (IDPs) has been formed across Tripoli, with the conflict zone expanding and more civilians evacuating. Meanwhile, the death of Captain Saddam Ekshira, the commander of the 301 Battalion's Kornet Company, represented a major loss for GNA forces and has impacted morale. Separately, the controversial former mufti, Sadiq Gharyani, continues to stir controversy and accuse the GNA of not doing enough to support the war effort. In a televised interview, he stated the GNA's Chief of Staff "are completely absent from the scene and do not participate in the ongoing clashes". Gharyani attacked the GNA by stating "Where are you officials, what actions have you taken to protect civilians?" In the East, authorities will continue to combat illegitimate armed groups operating across urban environments such as Benghazi. Wanis Boukhmada, the LNA Saiqa Special Forces commander, ordered the arrest of all armed groups impersonating military officers, though it remains unclear how/if the measure will be implemented on the ground. Of note, the Saiqa battalion confirmed sending two military formations to Tripoli frontlines.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for the EU's Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Libya expert Wolfgang Puzstai, retraces Libya's political conundrum and provides an overview of the failure of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) to bring about a lasting solution to the crisis. Puzstai writes "An unstable Libya has wide-ranging impacts: as a safe haven for terrorists, it endangers its north African neighbours, as well as the wider Sahara region. But terrorists originating from or trained in Libya are also a threat to Europe, not only through the radicalisation of the Libyan expatriate community (such as the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017). Furthermore, it is one of the most important transit countries for migrants on their way to Europe. Through its vast oil wealth, Libya is also of significant economic relevance for its neighbours and several European countries." The author also explores the way forward and argues that even after the Tripoli battle has ended, a political solution will need to be formed, regardless of who actually takes control of the capital city. Given that the LPA is unlikely to meet all requirements to stabilize the country and fulfill all stakeholders' demands, Puzstai argues that a "political solution needs to centre on the outlined decentralised, bottom-up approach based on Libya's old constitution. An interim constitution could be adopted by a national conference of tribal elders and elected local representatives, which would take much of the heat out of the discussion and allow local entities to focus on their own development."

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an interview with *The Washington Times'* Guy Taylor, GNA Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha warned of the potential ramifications linked to a growing Russian presence in Libya and called for more US involvement. Bashagha's comments were made during his visit to Washington, where together with Foreign Minister Mohamed Siyala, they urged Washington to do more to support them combat Moscow's influence. Bashagha compared Russia's growing involvement in Libya to the Syrian case. "For the Russians, Libya is very important geopolitically, because Libya has a big reserve in oil and gas and we have a very big coastline, close to Europe, across from NATO bases in Europe, and because Libya is the gateway to Africa," Mr. Bashagha said. "The Russians want to increase their influence in Africa going forward." Bashagha also adopted a dovish tone when speaking about Egypt. The Minister stated Egypt is an important partner and that he had hoped Cairo would support the GNA to counter Russia's influence given it is not within the interests of any regional actor. Speaking of mutual interests with Egypt, Bashagha emphasized that "Their security is our security".

# About Whispering Bell



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