



1. The Big Picture

Jathran oil ports seizure heralds possible wider conflict

Ibrahim Jathran, the former head of the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG), and a coalition of militants, including Benghazi Defence Brigades (BDB) elements, attacked and seized Libya's primary oil ports of Es-Sider and Ras Lanuf on 14 Jun. Thus far, clashes opposing Jathran to Libyan National Army (LNA) units have resulted in at least 42 fatalities, with an estimated loss of 400k barrels per day (bpd) and 880 million USD monthly. Amid mounting evidence that the LNA's operation to retake the ports will also require establishing control over Sirte and Bani Walid, the development will have wider ramifications on the nationwide security situation.

Jathran's latest seizure is a critical and significant development that could draw Libya into a renewed active conflict following a relative stabilization of the security situation. Unlike his 2013 blockade, Jathran's latest seizure appears to have a broader political dimension. By stating he will allow oil to continue to flow through official channels, the young militiaman appears less concerned with short-term gains, which corroborates concerns that this is a politically-conscious move allegedly sanctioned and funded by some elements in the West who could feel marginalized in the aftermath of the Paris Summit.

Regardless of the motive(s) behind Jathran's attack, the development is directly undermining Haftar and the LNA's power projection capabilities and is the latest evidence of the importance of Libya's "deep pockets" and local armed groups' impact over the security situation. The attack exposes gaps in the LNA's hold over the East, while raising prospects for allegiances to shift and new divisions to emerge.

Meanwhile, from a tactical standpoint, the LNA is expected to rapidly oust Jathran. However, the strategic advantage provided by the LNA's airpower could prove ineffective should Jathran mobilize forces near critical infrastructure. It will become increasingly difficult for the LNA to carry out airstrikes without endangering oil infrastructure.

Amid growing Mgharba tribal animosity towards Haftar, and as Jathran's coalition expands to include elements with a range of grievances levelled at the LNA, the militiaman could maintain a strong presence in the area. Moreover, the Benghazi Defence Brigades' (BDB) involvement and partnership with Jathran, confirmed by Whispering Bell sources, could possibly be tied to an attempt to divert LNA forces from Derna and reduce the pressure on Derna Protection Force (DPF) militants, among other likely strategic objectives, including gathering and opening fronts for anti-LNA forces in the area, including from Benghazi and other Western towns.

Overall, it remains unclear how long Jathran will remain in position. Jathran will likely seek to exploit the tribal narrative to his advantage. Should Jathran maintain his presence, he will likely first begin by reinstating internally displaced Mgharaba tribes to gain their trust and legitimacy. As the LNA mobilizes from the East, and amid reports of reinforcements from Misrata, there is a strong possibility that clashes will expand to the West and South.

KEY POINTS

- LNA offensive to oust Jathran
- Clashes could expand West & South
- Direct impact on Haftar and LNA



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2. National Security Map

Oil Crescent clashes result in physical damage to two storage tankers in Ras Lanuf

Key

THREAT INDICATORS

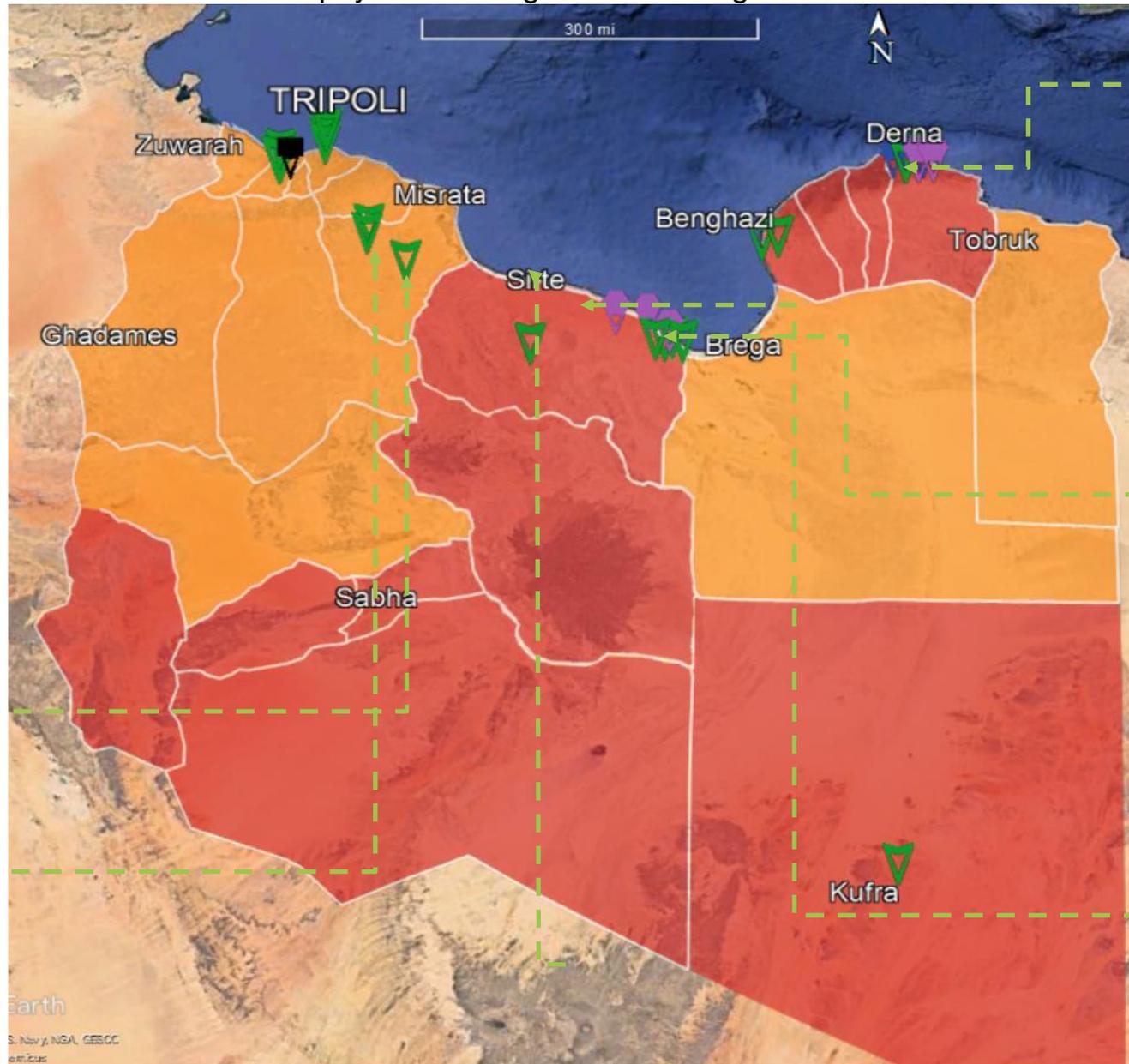
- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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

According to the Information Office of the "Nation's Storm" operation, launched by the Presidential Council (PC), the anti-terrorism force arrested four men affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) near Bani Walid in the As Saddadah area, at night on 09 Jun.

The Local Council of Bani Walid issued a statement calling on Libya's Attorney General to investigate the US Africa Command's (AFRICOM) 05 Jun drone strike that targeted prominent Islamic State (IS) commander, Abd Al-A'ati Ashtaiwy, accusing AFRICOM of targeting 3 civilians. Other reports suggest there were protests in Bani Walid condemning the AFRICOM strike on 11 Jun.



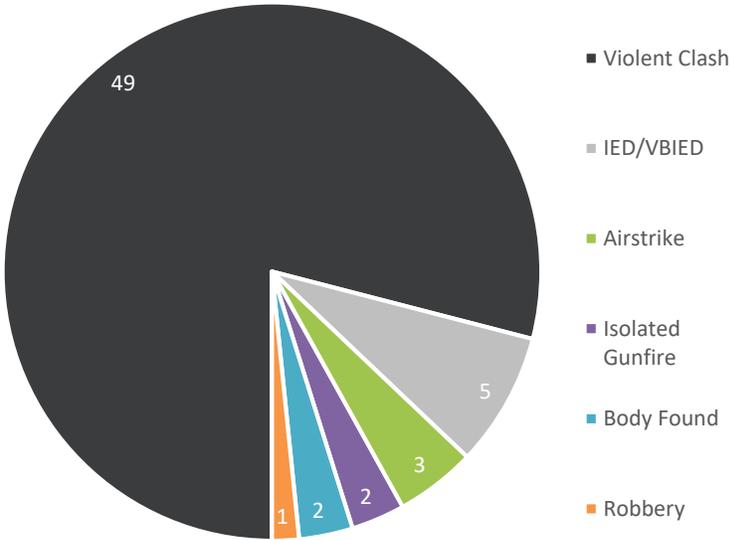
A double suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) attack targeting the Libyan National Army (LNA), resulted in a number of casualties, in Derna's Sheeha area, in the morning on Jun 12, amid an ongoing LNA offensive. On 11 Jun, reports suggest an additional suicide attack resulted in the death of 2 Libyan National Army (LNA) soldiers, whilst wounding 3 others.

According to the National Oil Corporation (NOC), prior to the clashes between Jathran and Libyan National Army (LNA) forces in the Oil Crescent area, there were five functional oil storage tankers at Ras Lanuf, though Tank No.12 was set ablaze on 14 Jun, whilst Tank No.2 additionally caught fire on 17 Jun, reducing Ras Lanuf's storage capacity from 950,000 barrels to 555,000 barrels.

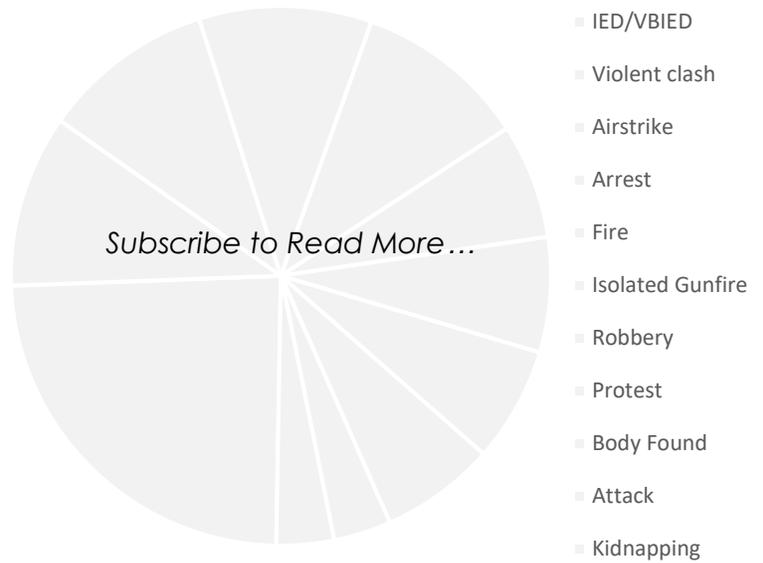
A Benghazi Defence Brigade (BDB) convoy of at least 10 vehicles was purportedly moving East of Sirte on 11 Jun. Meanwhile, closely following these suspicious movements, the Libyan National Army's (LNA) Air Force confirmed it carried out three airstrikes, one at approximately 100hrs and two at 1500hrs, targeting extremist elements' positions approximately 60 kms South of Sirte on 11 Jun.

3. Nationwide Security Analysis Surge in nationwide fatalities due to clashes in Oil Crescent

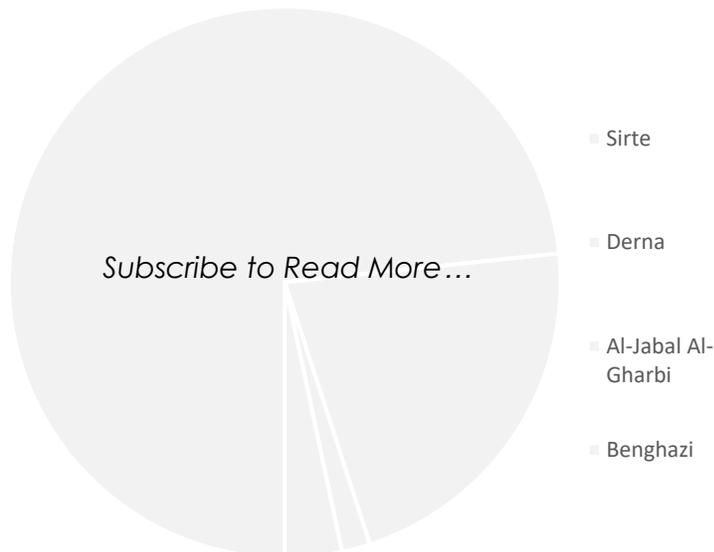
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



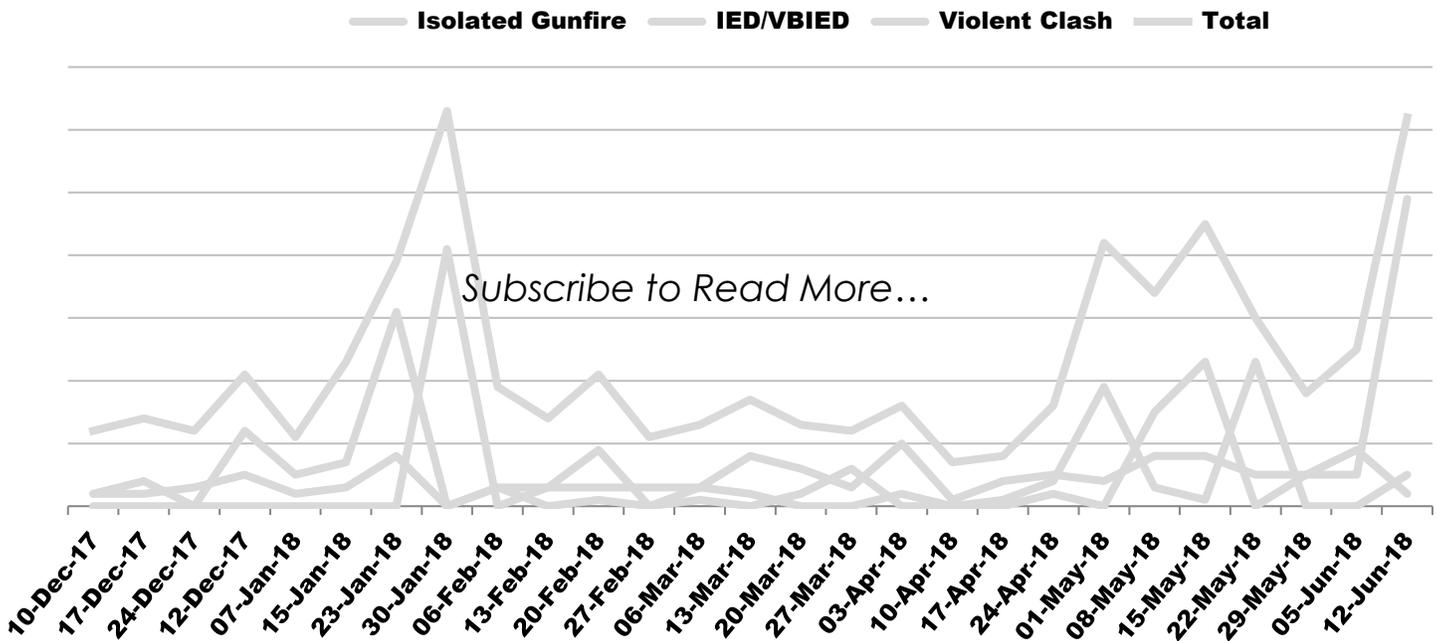
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



Nationwide incidents by national district (Past week)



Nationwide Fatalities by Type of Attack (Past 27 Weeks)



Data Analysis

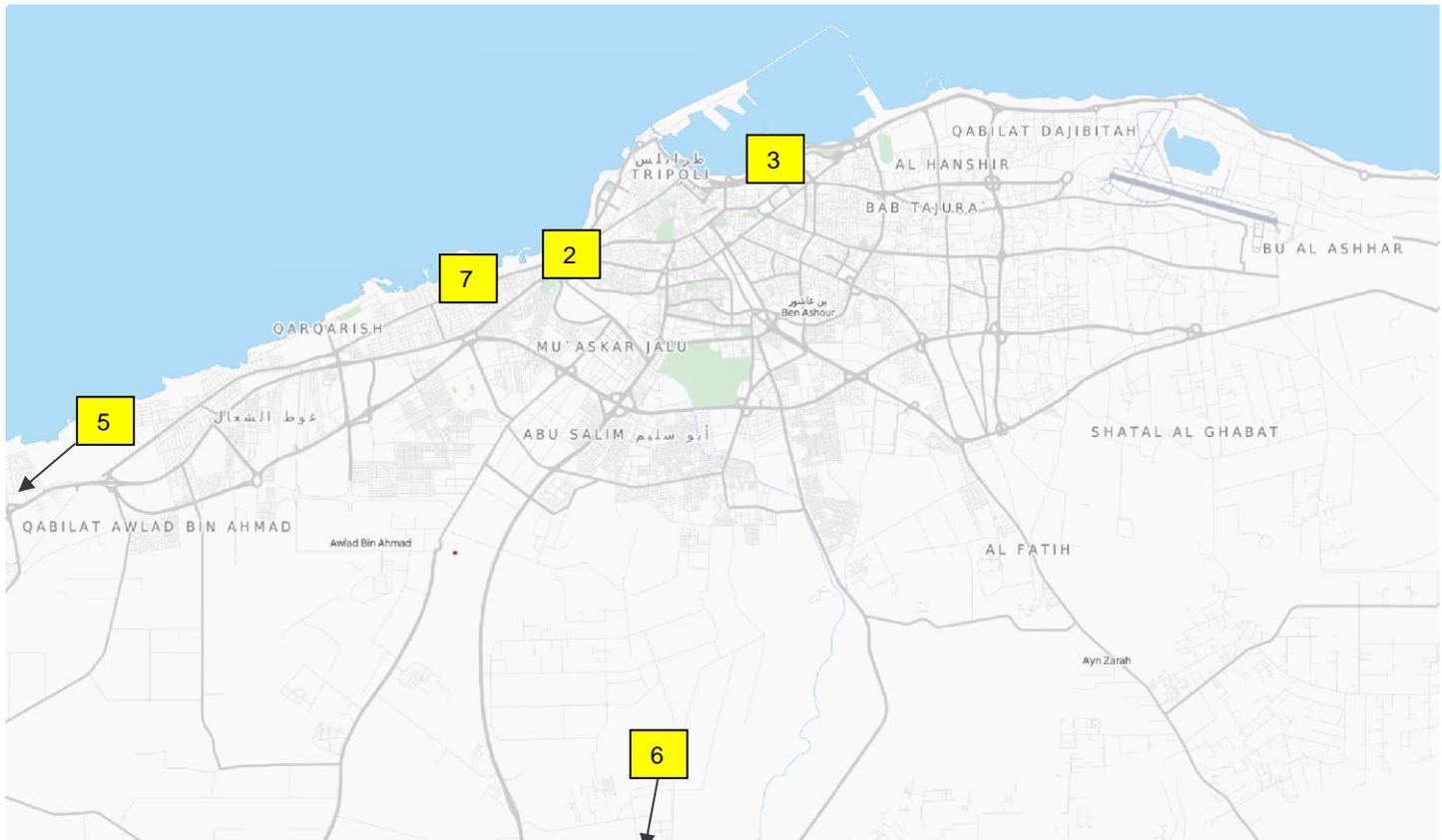
Whispering Bell recorded this week a total of 62 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 25 deaths reported last week and 18 the week before. This week, Ibrahim Jathran's attack and subsequent seizure of Ras Lanuf and Es-Sider accounted for most of the fatalities recorded, with at least 44 fatalities recorded in the Sirte National District. Meanwhile, there was a relative decrease in the number of isolated gunfire cases. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 7 reports of IED/VBIED incidents, 3 episodes of violent clashes, 3 arrests, 3 reports of fire outbreaks, and a kidnapping.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 9 incidents, including 2 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell recorded in Tripoli a fire incident. At approximately 0200hrs on 10 Jun, reports suggest a fire broke out at an electricity grid near the Burj Bou Laila Traffic Light on Tripoli's Al-Kurnish Road, resulting in the road's temporary closure. There were no further security incidents reported and the cause of the fire remains unclear, though electrical faults and soaring temperatures across the country stand as a likely risk factor.

The week in Central Libya was dominated by movements and clashes involving Jathran-affiliated forces, including the Benghazi Defence Brigades (BDB). At approximately 0600hrs local time, emerging and conflicting reports suggested there were heavy clashes between Libyan National Army (LNA) units and militants near Ras Lanuf and Es-Sider on 14 Jun. The reports of clashes came amid unconfirmed sightings of Islamic State (IS) and BDB militants and a potential LNA mobilization in Harawah. This came amid reports that the LNA's Al-Saiqa Special forces were en route to the area to thwart any potential attack. Clashes near Wadi Khila were later confirmed at approximately 0830hrs with reports indicating the use of heavy artillery, including BM-21 Grad missiles. The LNA's 210 Brigade reportedly destroyed 3 technical vehicles with no further indication as to whether militants had been able to advance any further at approximately 0845hrs. Reports suggest militants engaged LNA forces from three separate fronts, including South of Ras Lanuf and in Es-Sider. There were also reports of two LNA airstrikes targeting militants near Nawfaliyeh and Es-Sider, and reports of physical damage to a Harouge Oil Operations (HOO) crude oil storage tanker. Pictures were circulated across social media allegedly documenting the damage and fire at the HOO tanker. Crude oil loadings were halted at Ras Lanuf while Es-Sider port was shut and employees evacuated. Meanwhile, the Coastal was closed from Sidra/Ras Lanuf and towards Sirte. Clashes were ongoing at approximately 1130hrs with at least three reported casualties on the LNA's side, including at two LNA Saiqa Special Forces soldiers. The latest reports suggest the militants seized Es-Sider and Ras Lanuf and LNA forces retreated, with sources confirming the involvement of the BDB.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Misrata's Halbous Brigade deploys forces to TIA; motive unclear



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (07 Jun) Employee of Libya National Channel assaulted
2. (08 Jun) Two men abducted, likely SDF arrest
3. (10 Jun) Fire breaks out at electricity grid on Al-Kurnish
4. (10 Jun) Former regime figures released from prison
5. (10 Jun) ZMC forces withdraw from Warshaffana to Zintan
6. (14 Jun) Halbous Brigade deploys forces to TIA
7. (15 Jun) Authorities carry out inspection in Hay Al-Andalus

Militia movements

Reports indicate a complete withdrawal of Zintan Military Council (ZMC) forces from Warshaffana and towards Zintan on 10 Jun. The motive behind the withdrawal and subsequent movement remains unclear. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, reports suggest a video circulated across social media outlets allegedly showing Misrata's pro-Government of National Accord (GNA) Halbous Brigade deploying forces to Tripoli's International Airport (TIA) in the early hours of 14 Jun, following reports of a potential attack on the TIA by Zintan militias. Additional reports indicate a convoy of 22 armed vehicles in the area. There are conflicting reports over the precise motive behind the movements. The Halbous Brigade sided with the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) and Ghneiwa militia when laying siege to Presidential Council (PC) building in Tripoli and seizing the Tripoli International Airport (TIA) area on 25 May, despite all militias being

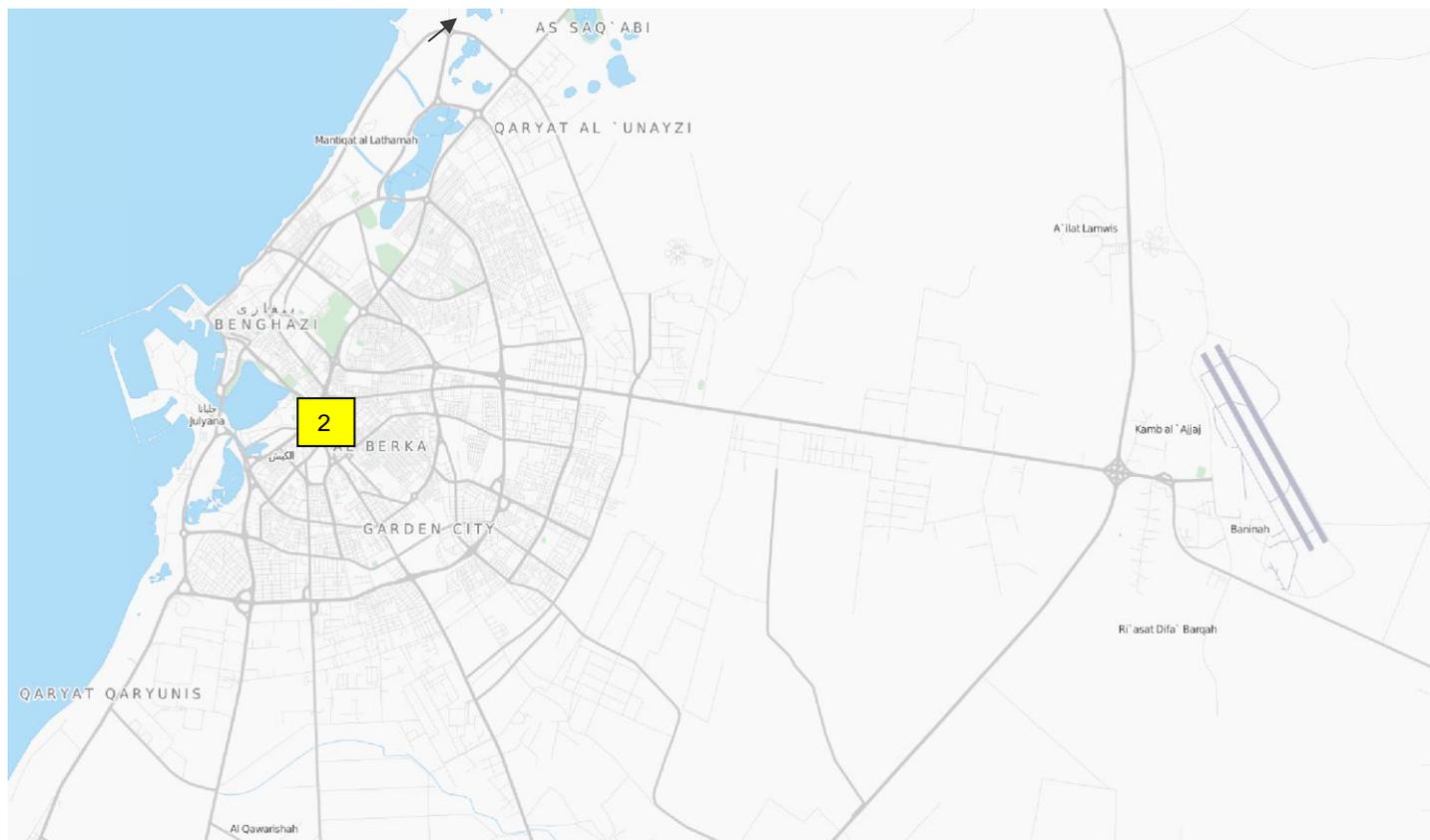
nominally under the GNA. The Halbous Brigade have reportedly controlled the area since then. Whilst the exact motive remains unclear, the latest movements are likely a show of force, with no confirmed indication of a potential Zintan attack.

Former regime figures released

An uncited security source confirmed leaked reports suggesting former regime senior officials, including the Head of the Foreign Security Apparatus, AbuZayd Dorda, were released from prison in Tripoli and Benghazi, on 10 Jun. The decision to release the figures was coordinated with the office of the Attorney General in Tripoli. Meanwhile, reports suggest the Head of the Investigation Bureau at the Attorney General Office, stated that the Minister of Justice released a decree to release multiple former regime figures on the basis of compassion for their deteriorating health conditions. Al-Sour noted that Dorda would be among those released.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Apartment raid and arrest of displaced DPF-affiliated family from Derna



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (10 Jun) Displaced family from Derna arrested
2. (13 Jun) Body with signs of gunshots found on highway

DPF-affiliates arrested

Benghazi's Public Information Bureau released reports on the arrival of a displaced family from Derna to the city of Benghazi on 10 Jun, after the bureau conducted investigations revealing that the family were affiliated with the Derna Mujahideen Shura Council (DMSC) and were wanted by security authorities. Following reports of their affiliation with Derna's militant group, authorities raided the apartment and arrested three family members, one of which was found wounded in the face as a result of his participation in clashes against the Libyan National Army (LNA) in Derna. Moreover, the bureau warned Benghazi's citizens over covering and/or hiding displaced individuals from Derna, demanding that they be informed immediately. It remains unclear whether the arrested individuals fled to Benghazi in an attempt to carry out an attack on the city. As the Derna offensive enters its decisive stages and as civilians flee the city, it will likely become increasingly difficult for authorities to discern

between legitimate displaced individuals and extremist elements.

Body found

Reports suggest a body with signs of gunshots was found on Benghazi's highway on 13 Jun. Neither the motive behind the killing, nor the identity of the perpetrators are known. Sporadic security incidents remain frequent across Benghazi.

6. What's next

Shifting allegiances and clashes to intensify in Oil Crescent and beyond

POLITICAL FORECAST

The attack on the Ras Lanuf and Es-Sider oil terminals, by militants, including Ibrahim Jathran, stands as the most recent threat to national security, and undermines the political process. Amid both West and East power hubs continuing to operate in their respective areas, taking little to no steps at unification efforts, Jathran's forces likely perceived the fragmentation as an opportunity to seize the Oil Crescent. Internationally, the attack was condemned by the US, France and Italy, whilst locally the National Oil Corporation (NOC) called for the militants' immediate withdrawal. Whilst Al-Serraj attempts to maintain control in Tripoli and the West amid reports of decreasing popularity over corruption allegations, Haftar continues to push towards fully capturing Derna from militant groups. Jathran's seizure is the latest evidence of the potential for Libya's "deep pocket" armed groups to significantly change the outcome of any political solution in Libya following the non-binding Paris agreement. Haftar's forces will likely attempt to regain control of the oil terminals, as managed previously, in an effort to gain political leverage. Haftar is unlikely to negotiate with Jathran as such an outcome would represent a loss for the General.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "*Bloomberg*", the authors, Ghaith Shennib and Hattem Mohareb, discuss how Haftar's full capture of Derna could give him power ahead of scheduled elections, though it could also worsen tribal feuds. "The battle for Derna, home to 125,000 people, has overshadowed last month's French-brokered agreement between Haftar and a rival United Nations-backed government in Tripoli to work toward presidential and parliamentary elections in December. Haftar has billed the Derna campaign as an all-out effort to crush an Islamist stronghold. Though Derna is not home to any oil facilities and holds little strategic value, Haftar says its capture would help bring stability to a nation that's known nothing but chaos since Moammar Qaddafi's 2011 ouster and killing. His opponents say the assault is exacerbating tribal tensions and could complicate international efforts to unify the North African country, where parallel governments and institutions vie for power in the east and west. "If Derna falls into Haftar's hands, that means the country is slipping dangerously toward splitting," said Ramadan Mitig, who heads the civil society commission in the western port city of Misrata and is active in the national reconciliation effort. "It's now the last thin thread that barely holds Libya together as one state." said Shennib and Mohareb.

SECURITY FORECAST

In the capital, reports emerged over Misrata's Halbous Brigade deploying forces to Tripoli International Airport (TIA) in response to a potential Zintani attack, though the incident did not destabilize the security situation, and stood as a more likely show of force. Additionally, reports suggested the release of ex-regime senior figures, though the incident has yet to have ramifications on the ground in Tripoli. Meanwhile, suspicious movements persisted in the areas of Sirte and Bani Walid, with reports of a Benghazi Defence Brigade (BDB) convoy heading towards Sirte, followed by Libyan National Army (LNA) airstrikes targeting extremist elements. However, the most critical security incident to hit Libya this week, and one that will likely have widespread political and security implications, was an attack by militants, headed by the former head of the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG), Ibrahim Jathran, on the oil terminals in the Ras Lanuf and Es-Sider areas, resulting thus far in at least 42 fatalities, and damaging two oil tanks, on 14 Jun. Whilst Haftar's Derna offensive reaches its final stages, the LNA is likely to increase its counter offensive in the Oil Crescent amid Jathran's opposition & aspirations to establish a long-term presence in the area.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for "*The European Council On Foreign Relations*", the author, Tarek Megerisi, discusses how pushing for elections could prove to be counter-productive for Libya, and the importance of the role of European powers in securing the electoral process. "Elections in Libya have the capacity to stimulate the change the country needs, but they also have the capacity to be seismically destabilising. The best possible chance of success will come with genuine unity from European actors. This starts with an agreement among the key European actors in particular over what type of elections – parliamentary, presidential or both – it would be most productive to hold, and to work with the UN Support Mission, the HNEC and individual Libyan powerbrokers towards mitigating the many risks involved with hosting elections at present. European actors will also need to find a unified position when dealing with Libyan political and military actors and regional players if they are to lessen the plan's vulnerability to disruption from spoilers. Recent history has taught us that disunity and confusion on the international scene is inevitably mirrored on the ground in Libya. If 2018's elections are not to mirror 2014's then the lessons of the last four years will need to be learned." said Megerisi.

About Whispering Bell



Contact Whispering Bell at: +971-4-448-6690 or at ras@whisperingbell.com

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