



# 1. The Big Picture

## IS hit-and-run operation targets LNA position near Ajdabiya

The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility, via its Amaq publication, for an attack targeting the Al-Qanan police station, approximately 10 kms South-East of Ajdabiya, resulting in physical damage, at least one fatality, and five other casualties at approximately 0400hrs on 02 Jun.

Confirmation of IS involvement closely followed a state of emergency declared in the Oil Crescent area and a deployment of forces in Ajdabiya. This represents the closest attack to Ajdabiya in the past five months, highlighting a high situational awareness of nearby areas by IS militants. The attack also corroborates Whispering Bell's assessment, in a previous weekly publication, over IS militants' aspirations to return to Ajdabiya, a strategic town perceived by militants as the gateway towards the East, including Benghazi.

The attack was similar to the IS "hit and run" operation targeting an LNA checkpoint North of Awjilah on 22 May. Footage retrieved from a GoPro camera, allegedly left on-site by the militants, appears to show a group of 8-9 militants raiding the Al-Qanan police station on 02 Jun, potentially documenting militants' tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). The latest hit-and-run tactics differ from the multiple suicide vehicle-borne explosive device (SVBIED) attacks in nearby areas in the past 6 months.

Beyond, the complex attack against the High National Elections Commission (HNEC) in Tripoli on 02 May, IS will likely resort to such opportunistic hit-and-run operations near Ajdabiya, with teams of 5-10 militants, as this fits well within its defensive strategy.

Moreover, there continues to be a known extremist presence in Ajdabiya, both local extremist groups and at times a residual presence of IS militants. The lack of security and criminal networks along the Ajdabiya-Jalu axis and further South, will likely continue to provide IS militants with the freedom of movement and opportunity to carry out such attacks while later fleeing the scene.

Although difficult to ascertain with a high degree of confidence, there is a possibility IS militants could maintain a residual presence in areas near Ajdabiya due to their ability to exploit local communities' grievances and to gain some form of support. While the strong presence of the Zwayya and Maghrabi tribes would supposedly prevent IS militants from gaining local support, growing local resentment towards authorities could create a permissive environment enabling IS sleeper cells to disperse and/or carry out further such attacks. This would come amid reports that IS is actively exploiting the South's security situation to recruit militants.

However, despite the latest attacks, the group does not possess the capabilities to establish a stronger foothold across the country. IS' presence in Libya remains focused on establishing supply lines and training camps, though such opportunistic attacks on LNA checkpoints and/or oil and gas infrastructure will likely continue as they enable the group to assert its presence.

**KEY POINTS**

- Extremist presence in Ajdabiya
- IS could exploit local grievances
- Closest recent attack to Ajdabiya



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## 2. National Security Map

Clashes between DPF and LNA intensify as LNA seizes additional positions in Derna

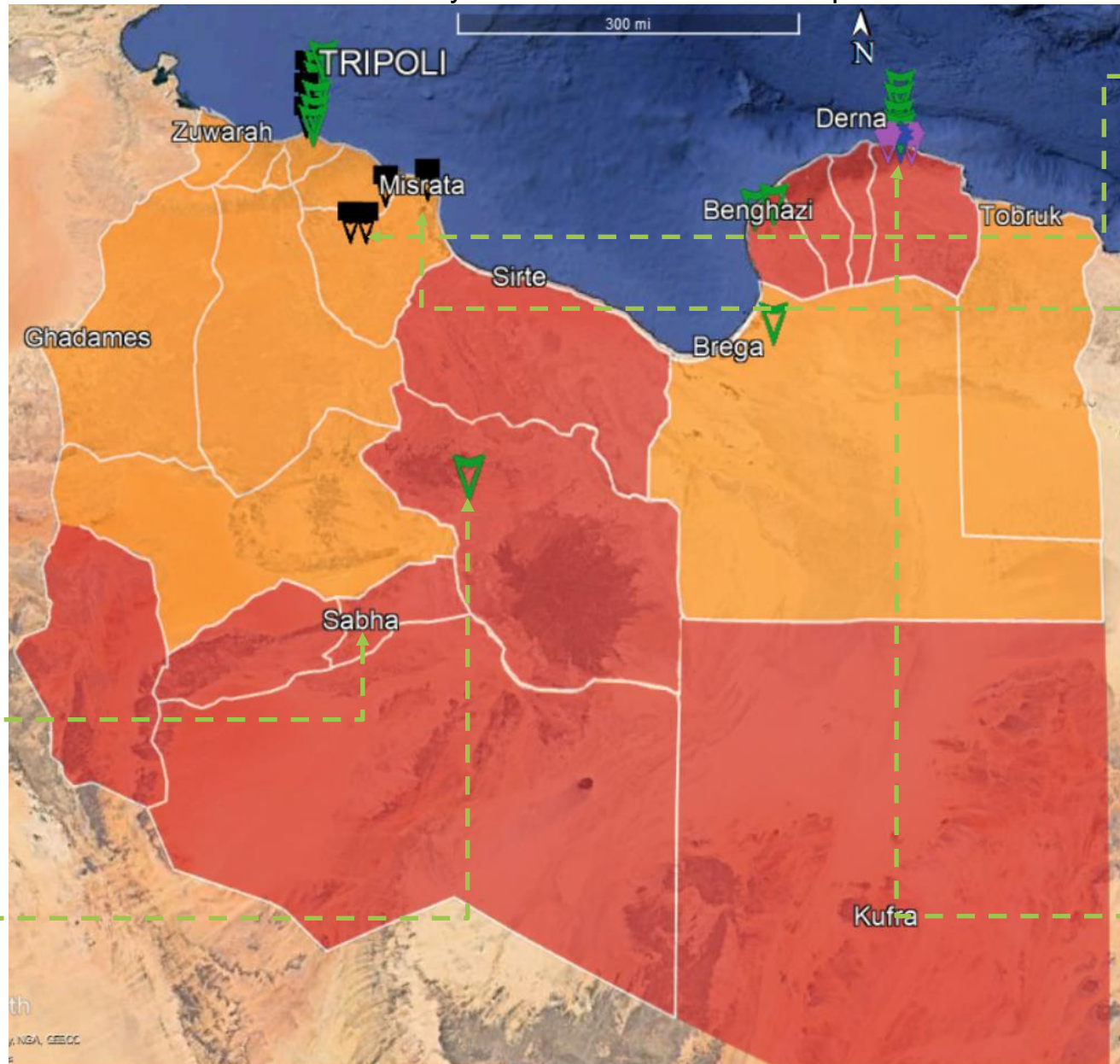
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



The Libyan National Army (LNA) claims it targeted positions South of Sabha, including the Al-Harari camp in Sabha's Al-Hejara area controlled by Tebu forces, at approximately 0700hrs on 02 Jun.

Local reports suggest dozens of civilians from the town of Hun staged a demonstration in Hun's downtown area, in protest against government corruption and the misuse of public funds following the publication of the Audit Bureau 2017 Annual Report.

Local reports suggest an airport guard accidentally shot one of his colleagues in Bani Walid's Airport at dawn on 30 May.

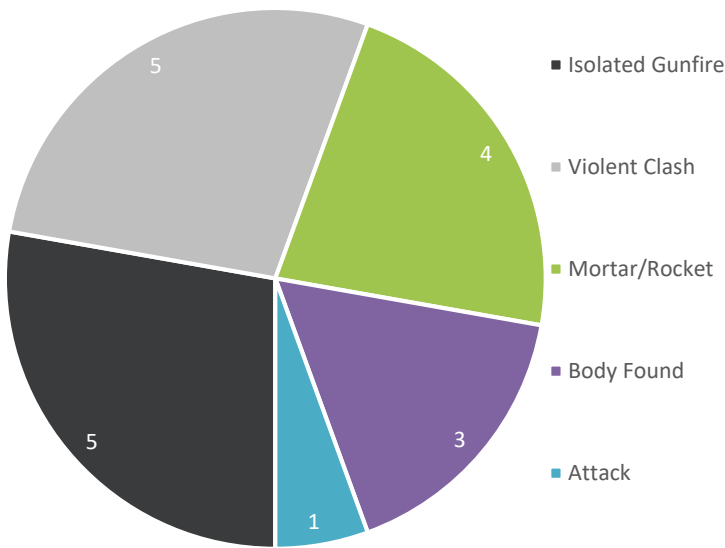
On 03 Jun, Misrata and Tawergha signed a peace treaty, potentially enabling approximately 40,000 Tawerghan internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their city after years of displacement since the 2011 uprisings, in which the Tawerghans were forced out of their city by Misrata for their alleged support of the former regime. Reports suggest the deal aims to facilitate reconciliation and prevent hostilities between the long-disputed cities.

Libyan National Army (LNA) forces seized multiple Derna Protection Force (DPF) positions on 29 May as part of the ongoing offensive in Derna. Meanwhile, reports suggest DPF militants carried out two Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVBIED) attacks to stop LNA units from advancing into the city. There are conflicting reports suggesting the attacks were VBIEDs aimed at targeting Derna civilians who fled the city and attempted to surrender to the LNA.

### 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

#### Significant decrease in recorded nationwide fatalities

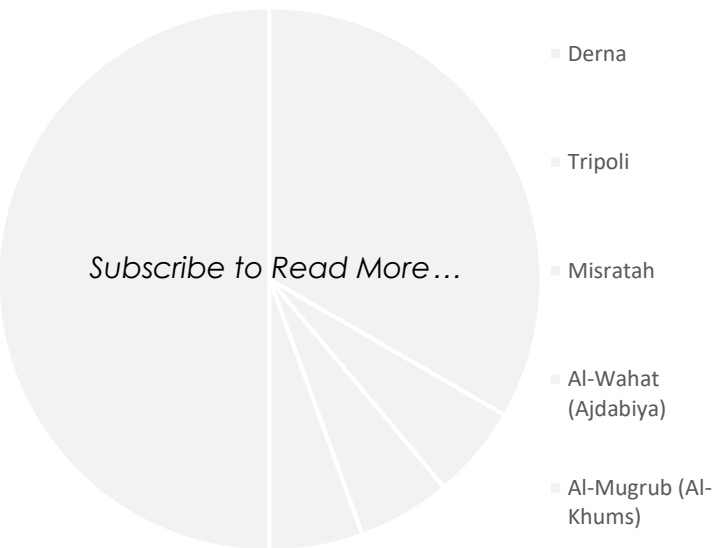
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



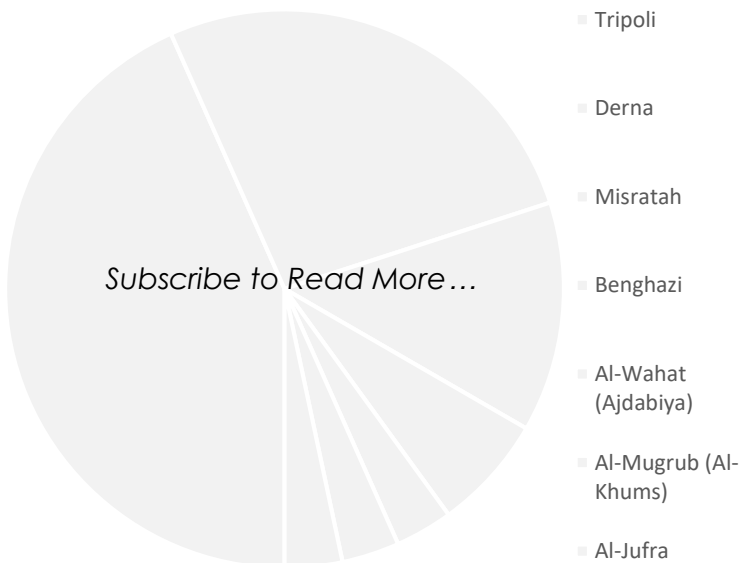
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



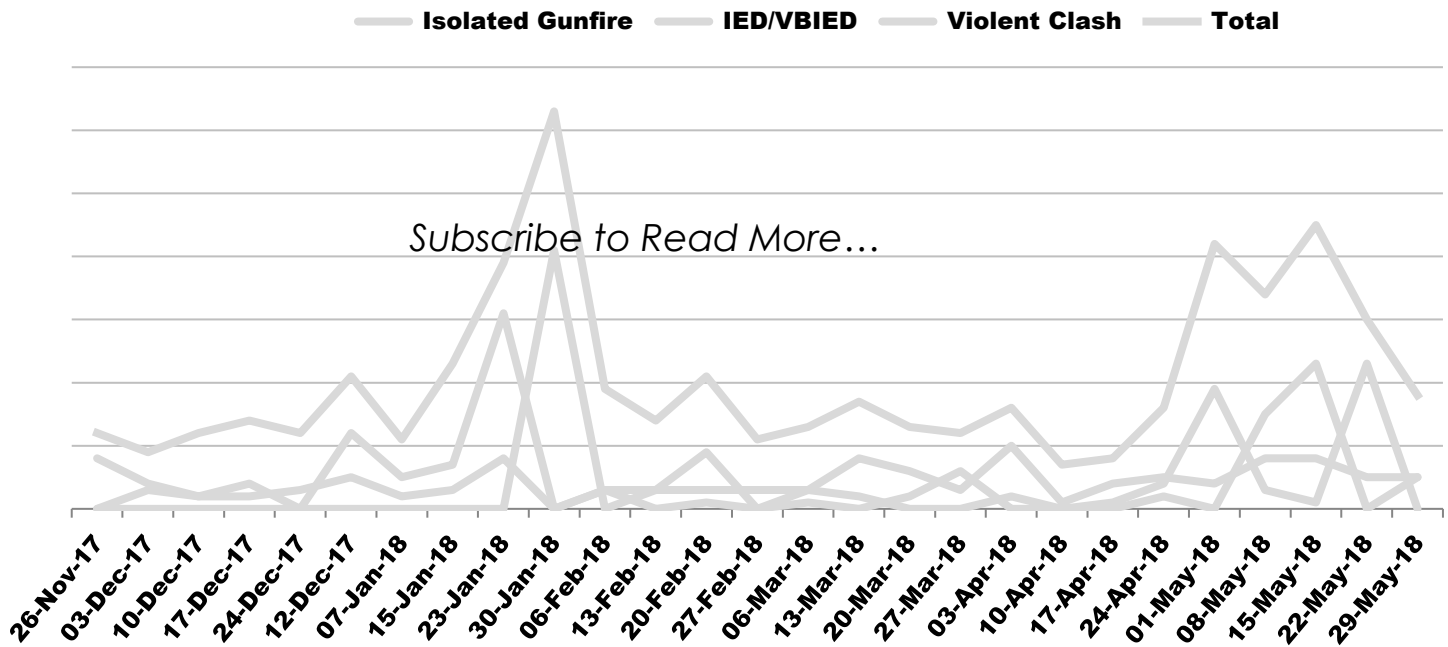
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 18 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 30 deaths reported last week and 45 the week before. This week, while the nationwide fatalities numbers decreased, there was little to no change recorded in figures in Tripoli and Derna. The ongoing offensive in Derna accounted for half of nationwide fatalities. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 7 cases of isolated gunfire, 6 protests, 2 kidnappings, 2 episodes of violent clashes, and an attempted assassination.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 14 incidents, including 13 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell recorded in Tripoli a raid by the Deterrence Apparatus, former Special Deterrence Force (SDF), and 301 militia, which led to the arrest of a displaced man from Ajdabiya in Tripoli's Al-Da'wa Al-Islamiya area on 27 May. The motive behind the arrest remains unclear, though it may have been prompted by the Deterrence Apparatus and 301 militia receiving intelligence on the individual's affiliation to a terrorist and/or criminal group, with potential motives to destabilize the security situation in the capital city. Meanwhile, reports suggest unidentified assailants killed two men in a drive-by shooting in Tripoli's Qasr Khair area on 26 May.

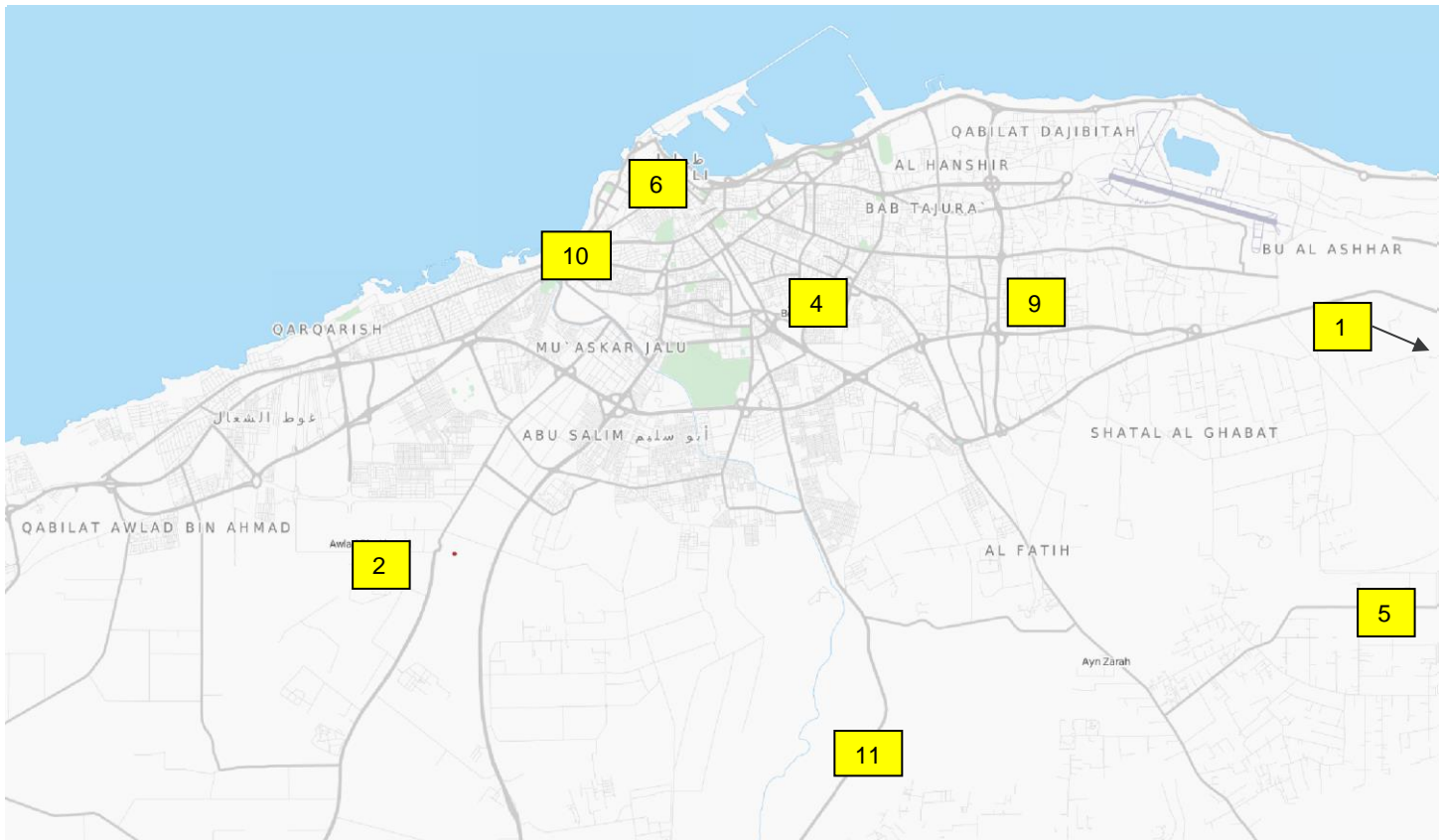
There were no new reports of IS movements recorded this week in central parts of the country. In Sirte, a road traffic accident along the Coastal Road, resulted in the death of a mother and her infant, while critically injuring another man on 31 May. Meanwhile, explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to pose a threat to civilians in the city. On 03 Jun, two young adults were injured by an ERW planted by insurgents on the outskirts of Sirte in past operations against IS.

Turning to southern Libya, there were no new reports of clashes between the Alwad Suleiman, Tebu, and foreign forces in Sabha, though there were unconfirmed reports of an LNA airstrike targeting an unidentified armed group. Whispering Bell could not immediately verify the authenticity of these reports. Meanwhile, at least multiple roads were closed due to flooding and issues with the sewage water system in Sabha.

In Eastern Libya, the commander of the Libyan National Army's (LNA) Omar Al-Mukhtar Operations Room, Major General Salem Al-Rafadi, stated that the army took full control and subsequently liberated Derna's Fattaih Heights area. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, reports suggest the LNA targeted a vehicle with a thermal rocket. In separate developments, local reports suggest a civilian was killed by shrapnel, and 2 other women due to heart attacks, along with 3 others injured by a mortar shell. Further advances into the city will likely prompt Derna Protection Force (DPF) militants to retreat further into residential areas, which could expose civilians.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### Surge in bodies found and prevailing tensions over kidnapped activist



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (26 May) Two men killed in drive-by shooting in Qasr Khair
2. (27 May) Displaced man from Ajdabiya arrested
3. (28 May) Football fans protest against assault of club members
4. (28 May) Protest demanding Bab Tajura Brigade evacuates Tripoli
5. (28 May) Man's corpse found with gunshots in Wadi Al-Rabei
6. (28 May) 6 Chadian females assault and rob local female
7. (29 May) Bab Tajoura Brigade kidnap prominent activist
8. (29 May) Corpse of Member of Southern municipal council found
9. (30 May) Dispute between Nawasi militia & locals
10. (30 May) Vehicle catches fire near Gheiran roundabout
11. (01 Jun) Man's corpse found in Khallat Al-Forjan

#### Sporadic security incidents

Reports suggest a dispute between members of the Nawasi militia and locals escalated into a sporadic exchange of gunfire, with shots fired in the air by the militia on the Beach Road in Tripoli's Souq Al-Jumaa area 30 May. There were no further security incidents reported and the motive behind the dispute remains unclear. The militia likely fired shots in the air to intimidate locals. Disputes between militia members and locals remain common across Tripoli. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, reports suggest the Bab Tajoura Brigade kidnapped the founder of the "Voice of the People Movement" and took him to an unknown location on 29 May in retaliation for his participation in white-flag protests in Tripoli's Ras Hssen area on 25 May. The victim was identified as Mohammed Al-Boaa, a prominent and popular local activist. The latest reports suggest the militia released Al-Boaa on 02 Jun. The release of Al-Boaa may have been prompted by

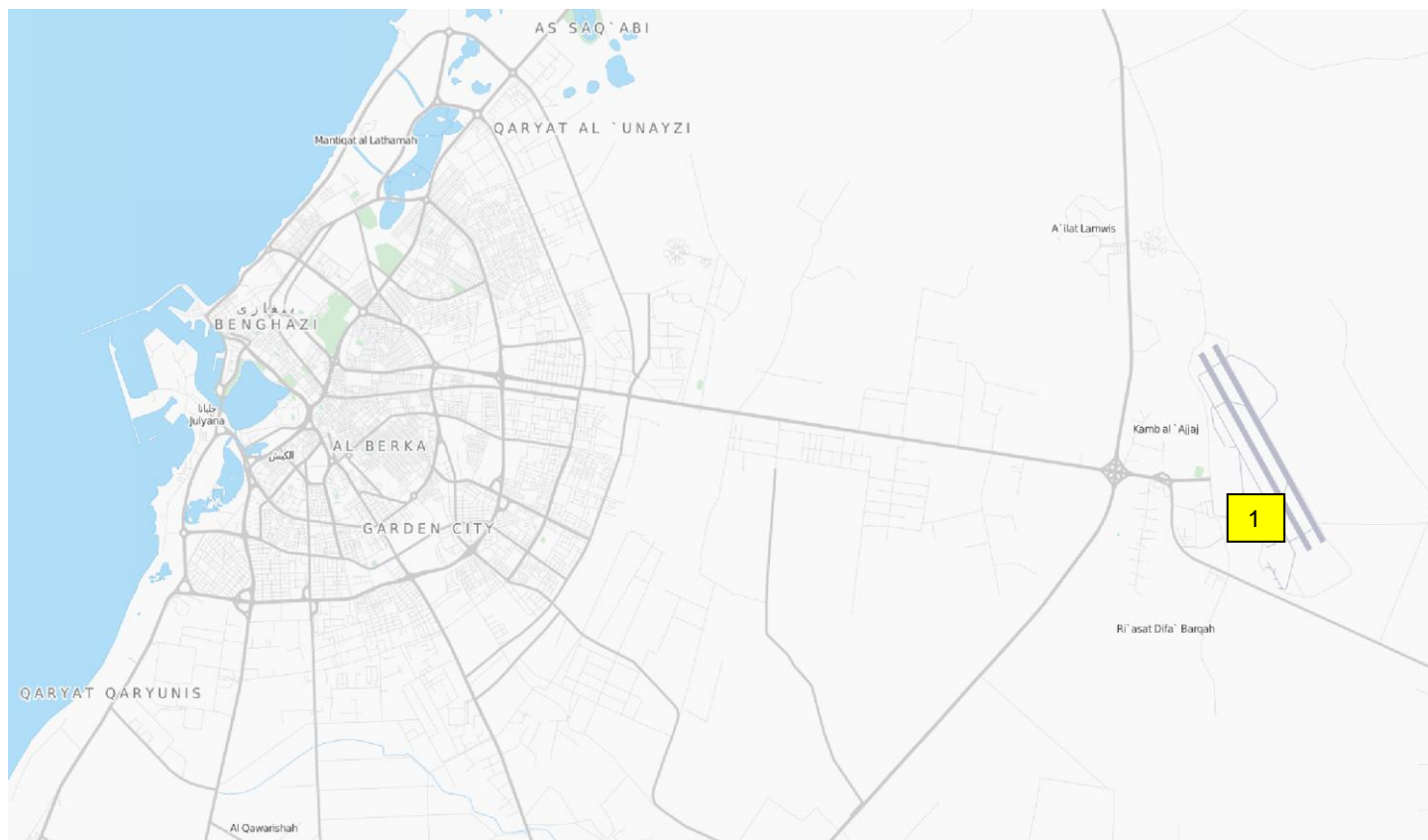
increased local dissatisfaction of the militia in the areas of Ras Hssen and Ben Ashour.

#### Total of 3 bodies found

A man's corpse with signs of gunshots was found in Tripoli's Wadi Al-Rabei area on 28 May. Reports suggest the man was originally from Gherian and resided in Tripoli's Al-Hadba area. Meanwhile, authorities found the body of a man in his fifties in Tripoli's Khala Al-Furjan area on 01 Jun. Initial reports suggest the man was a taxi driver and was travelling with passengers to Tunisia. In a separate incident, the body of Bashir Ali Ghaith, a member of the municipal council of Bint Biyeh in Southern Libya, was found on 29 May in an unidentified area of Tripoli after he was kidnapped. There is no further information related to the incident and neither the identity of the assailants nor the motive are known. There is a strong possibility the incident is politically-motivated.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Al-Ahli football fans attack bus carrying Tripoli's Al-Ittihad football players



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (26 May) Sit-in protest at Benina International Airport
2. (27 May) Al-Ahli football fans attack bus of rival team

#### Tripoli football team assaulted

Local reports suggest a number of fans of Benghazi's Al-Ahli football club attacked the bus carrying the players of Tripoli's Al-Ittihad football club before their scheduled game against Al-Ahli in Benina's stadium. Additional reports suggest the players traveling in the bus were attacked as they were heading from their residence to the stadium for the scheduled match. Following the attack, the match was cancelled, though recent reports suggest the match has been rescheduled for 03 Jun. Moreover, the security incident prompted protests in multiple areas across Tripoli on 28 May. Security incidents related to football and other sporting fixtures remain common across Libyan cities.

#### Benina Airport developments

Reports suggest flights resumed at Benghazi's Benina International Airport following a sit-in by the Libyan Ground Services (LGS) company due to salary grievances on 26 May. The sit-in ended upon authorities

guaranteeing salary payments. According to the director of the airport, air traffic resumed and the situation is stable at the airport. Benina Airport remains subject to temporary halts due to unsolved salary grievances and disputes between the airport's security and military personnel. Meanwhile, in a separate development, reports suggest a delegation from the Tunisian Civil Aviation and Airports Authority (OACA) visited Benina International Airport, Tripoli's Mitiga Airport, and Misrata International Airport, to assess security and safety procedures and conformity with international standards, discussing the possibility of the return of Tunisian Airlines and potential resumption of flights to Libyan airports. A resumption of regional and international flights to Libya's main airports would highlight an overall improved security situation. Despite the willingness of multiple countries to resume flights, the overall security situation remains a challenge.

## 6. What's next

### Lack of consensus and tensions over Paris timeline for elections

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

The Paris Summit concluded on 29 May with participants agreeing on the necessity to hold elections by 10 Dec 2018, though no agreement was signed. French President Emmanuel Macron stated that Libyan participants refused to sign an agreement due to a lack of recognition of the legitimacy of some parties. The summit's outcome lacked a significant political breakthrough beyond non-binding pledges. Moreover, parties agreed over the importance of developing a constitutional basis for elections, with electoral laws to be implemented by 16 Sep 2018, and Parliamentary and Presidential elections to be held on 10 Dec 2018. There will be a political conference to follow up on the implementation of the initiatives parties have committed to in Paris. However, amid no agreed constitution, and post-summit statements by the country's rivals suggesting that the attendees remain deeply fragmented and in opposition of one another, an inclusive deal seems farfetched. Clearly underlining the lack of consensus over the Paris Summit, there are emerging reports, albeit unconfirmed, of steps being taken by Italian officials in the capital city and Misrata to counter the French initiative.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "*Reuters*" the author, Aiden Lewis, highlights the political, legal, and security obstacles Libya faces in light of the Paris Summit outcome, where Libya's main players agreed on 10 Dec to hold presidential and parliamentary elections. "A commitment by key Libyan actors to hold elections in December faces multiple obstacles, including the lack of a legal framework for polls and escalating conflict in parts of the country. Some Libyans have said the country is too divided to cope with a national vote. Security is another challenge. Suicide attackers targeted the offices of the electoral commission in Tripoli in May, killing at least 12 people. Libya has no national security forces to oversee polls, or effective national institutions that can settle legal challenges. There is no consensus over how to unify the security forces and other divided bodies including the central bank - a further goal set out in the Paris statement. Some west Libyan armed groups, including from the key military power base of Misrata, see France as too close to their rival Haftar and stated their opposition to the Paris talks before they began. A senior LNA source stressed that Haftar had not put his signature to any deal" said Lewis.

#### SECURITY FORECAST

This week Tripoli witnessed a series of sporadic security incidents which will likely persist as militias continue to operate with little to no government oversight. Additionally, tensions remain between the Bab Tajoura Brigade and locals following the killing of two men on 24 May, with the potential for tensions to escalate should the militia continue to disrupt security in the area. Moreover, following the Paris Summit resulting in scheduled election dates, insurgents will likely seek to destabilize security toward the date of polling. Meanwhile, Misrata and Tawergha have reportedly signed a peace deal, though Tawergha elders' council rejected the deal prior to its amendments. Should the Tawerghans' return be halted once again, further hostilities are likely. In Libya's South, reports suggest an increased presence of extremists are exploiting the security vacuum to destabilize the region and beyond, in particular in the oil crescent area under the army's control. In the East, Haftar's forces will likely continue to make advancements amid an intensified offensive in Derna. In Benghazi, sporadic security incidents persist amid the army's full commitment to Derna's military campaign.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for "*Al-Monitor*" the author, Vasily Kuznetsov, discusses Russia's interests in facilitating economic cooperation with Libya following a stalemate of economic interaction since the 2011 uprising. "According to Dengov, major Russian corporations, mostly oil and gas companies such as Tatneft, are interested in returning to the Libyan market. Due to security issues, operating in the country is difficult, requiring constant interaction between Russian entrepreneurs and local Libyan authorities, including government officials, tribal chiefs and municipal leaders. It appears that on Russia's end, these issues are most likely to be settled in part by Dengov himself. Dengov also mentioned that last month, "representatives of Libyan security services" visited Moscow to meet with their Russian counterparts. "The Libyans expressed interest in deliveries of Russian security systems," Dengov said, but gave no details. Some other countries also appear to be changing their views of Libya. Some Western countries, UN officials and Libyans themselves expect the instability to end soon through evolving discourse. This emerging optimism is only partly driven by hopes of implementing the peace plan drawn up by UN Special Envoy Ghassan Salame." said Kuznetsov.

# About Whispering Bell



Contact Whispering Bell at: +971-4-448-6690 or at [ras@whisperingbell.com](mailto:ras@whisperingbell.com)

[Twitter](#)



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[LinkedIn](#)



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