

# 1. The Big Picture

## Haftar maintains Oil Crescent state of alert; attack possible

This week was marked by reports of a heightened threat of attack in the Oil Crescent area during the upcoming Eid Adha holiday period as Libya's oil production rose above 1 million barrels per day (bpd).

On 15 Aug, the Libyan National Army (LNA) reported a meeting between General Haftar, the Gulf Military Zone Commander Faouzi Mansouri, and other military commanders on 15 Aug in Ar-Rajmah camp. During the meeting, the commanders briefed Haftar on the security situation in the Oil Crescent area, and the LNA's deployment from Ajdabiya in the East to Ben Jawad in the West. The meeting was likely in anticipation of an attack by former Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) commander Ibrahim Jathran and affiliated militants after suspicious movement South of Sirte. There were also unconfirmed reports that Jathran and other militants crossed the Wadi Zamzam area.

In addition, the LNA 128 Infantry Brigade conducted a patrol near the Mabruk field and South of the Harawah area in the Sirte National District on 18 Aug. The 128 Infantry Brigade also reportedly conducted reconnaissance missions in the Al-Jufra National District, with no suspicious movements or activity reported.

Thus far, there is no reliable evidence of an imminent attack and the majority of reports remain unconfirmed. However, absent further information, it remains difficult to discredit a potential attack. Jathran previously exploited the Eid holiday period to seize Es-Sider and Ras Lanuf. There is also the possibility Jathran would mount an offensive from the "southern axis" and via the Kufra National District, instead of an attack from Sirte. Regardless of the likelihood of attack, Jathran is known to favour an element of surprise, which could temporarily undermine LNA units' defensive capabilities.

On the political front, the governor of the Tripoli-based Central Bank of Libya (CBL), Sadik Al-Kabir, dismissed the board of directors and the general manager of the Libyan Foreign Bank (LFB), Mohamed Ben Youssef, on 13 Aug. Tensions between the CBL and the LFB were apparent in Mar 2018, when the CBL accused the LFB of investing abroad with bonds with weak liability, allegedly leading to the loss of approximately 403 million USD. Reports suggest Mohamed Ben Youssef maintains close ties to the eastern-based CBL governor, Mohamed Shukri. The fact that Ben Youssef took a pro-eastern CBL stance likely influenced Al-Kabir's decision. The development widens the rift between the parallel central banks and adds another layer of uncertainty over the issue of oil revenue management talks ahead of the elections. Following the June-July 2018 crisis in the Oil Crescent, the Government of National Accord (GNA) agreed to conduct a review of the Tripoli-based CBL. With Al-Kabir's decision, East-West tensions over revenue management would protract.

Meanwhile, in the oil & gas sector, Libya's production is above 1 million barrels per day (bpd), up from 670k bpd following the June-July Oil Crescent crisis, according to estimates. The Sharara oil field is the latest to increase production. Despite a healthy recovery, security remains a challenge to Libya's oil and gas sector. There continues to be a force majeure status at the Zawiya terminal where crude is pumped from Sharara and Al-Feel fields.

### KEY POINTS

- Oil production above 1 million bpd
- Jathran could exploit Eid Adha period
- East-West central bank divide widens



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## 2. National Security Map

### Unidentified assailants set fire to Wafa-Mellitah pipeline near station 15

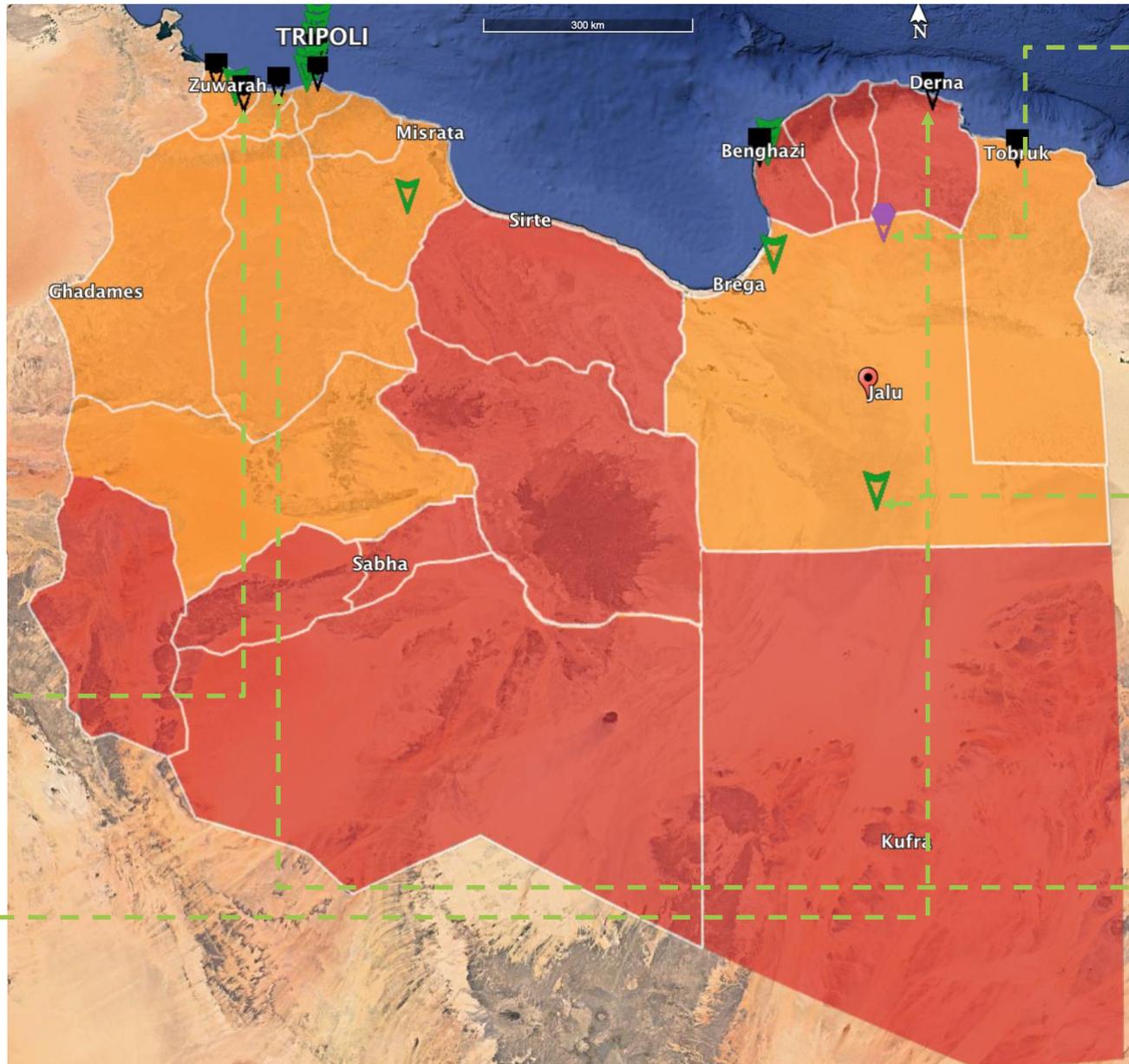
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



The Libyan National Army's (LNA) 101 Infantry Brigade clashed with Derna Protection Force (DPF) militants near Gate 200 along the Tobruk-Ajdabiya Road on 13 Aug. Reports indicate the LNA killed at least 15 militants, including prominent extremist militants, who had fled Derna. The incident would represent the first documented clash between the LNA and DPF militants outside Derna after the proclaimed end of combat operations in the city.

An unidentified armed group raided the Sarir water well field, part of the Great Man-Made River Project, South of Jalu on 12 Aug. Reports suggest the armed group stole 7 vehicles, supplies and medical equipment before fleeing the scene. The Great-Man River Authority described the incident as a terrorist attack, though thus far there is no evidence to ascertain the identity/affiliation of the assailants. The latest reports raised the possibility of an internal threat behind the incident.

Reports indicate heavy gunfire in Az-Zāwiyah and near the Az-Zawiyah Oil Refining Company at approximately 2300hrs on 17 Aug. Information related to the incident remains unclear though it comes amid reports of protests at the Az-Zawiyah refinery. Reports indicate protests by workers at the refinery continue to threaten the country's oil production from the Sharara oil field. According to the reports, a complete shutdown at Sharara, which is currently producing an estimated 297k barrels per day (bpd), is expected should workers prevent loading at the terminal.

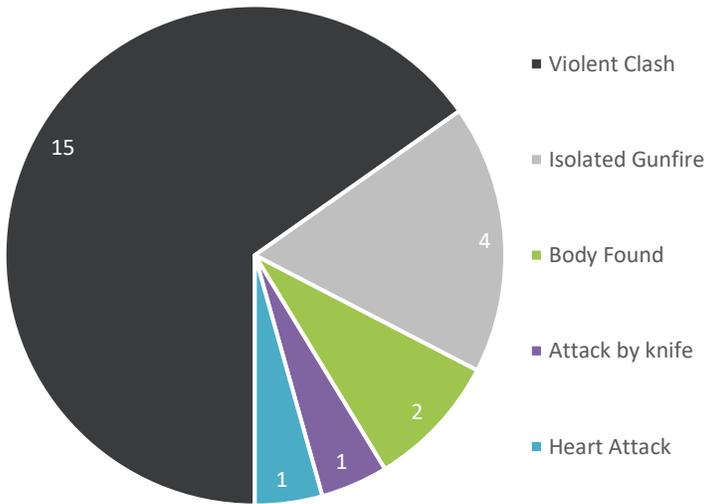
Unidentified assailants set the Wafa-Mellitah pipeline near station 15 on fire using rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), burnt tires and gasoline on 16 Aug. According to the National Oil Corporation (NOC), the arson attack did not result in any significant damage. The site is located approximately 50kms South of the Mellitah Oil and Gas Complex, and operated by the Mellitah Oil and Gas company, a joint venture between the NOC and Italian energy company Eni.

Reports suggest a Libyan National Army (LNA) convoy of 3 vehicles came under heavy fire in Derna's western entrance, near the 1805 Resort, on 14 Aug. The reports suggest the LNA's Tarik Ibn Ziyad Brigade subsequently moved in to "sweep" the area and eliminate remaining militants. Despite the proclaimed end of the Derna offensive, pockets of militants continue to operate across the city.

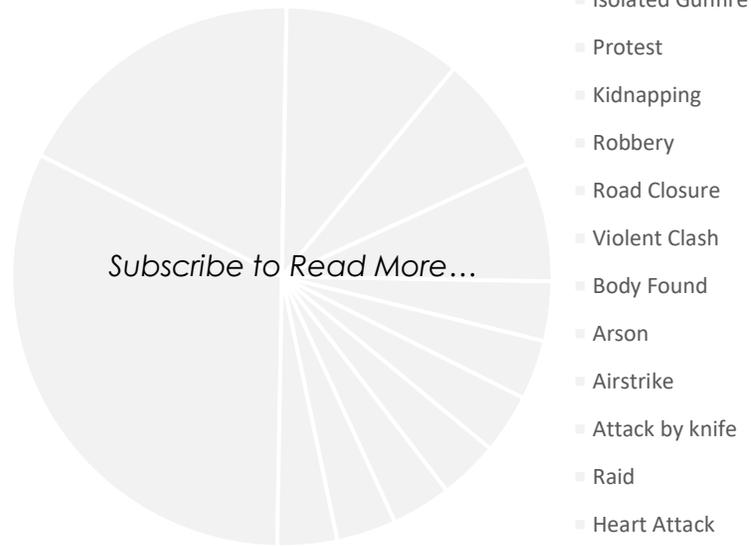
### 3. Nationwide Security Analysis

#### Nationwide fatalities increase due to clashes between LNA and militants

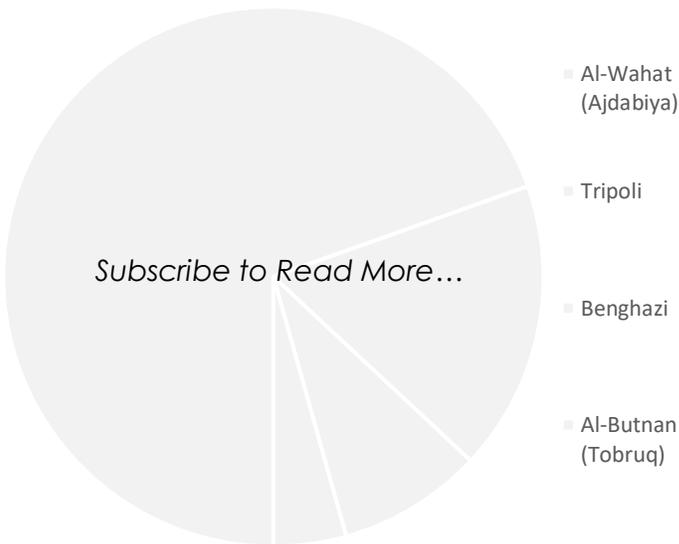
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



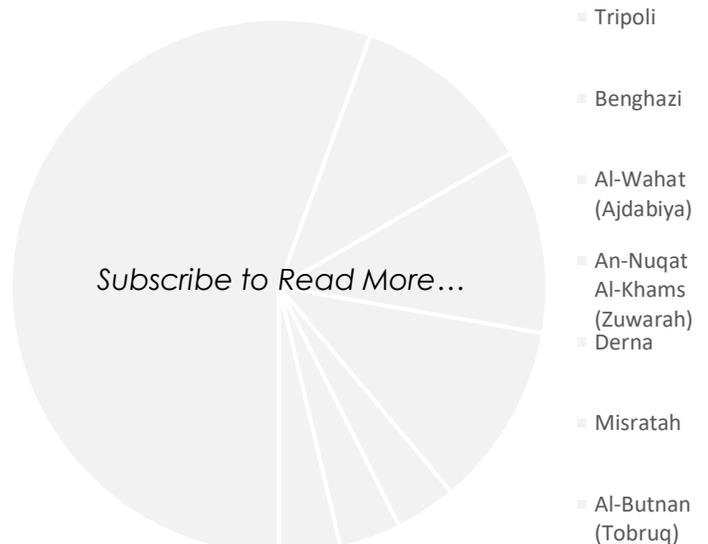
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



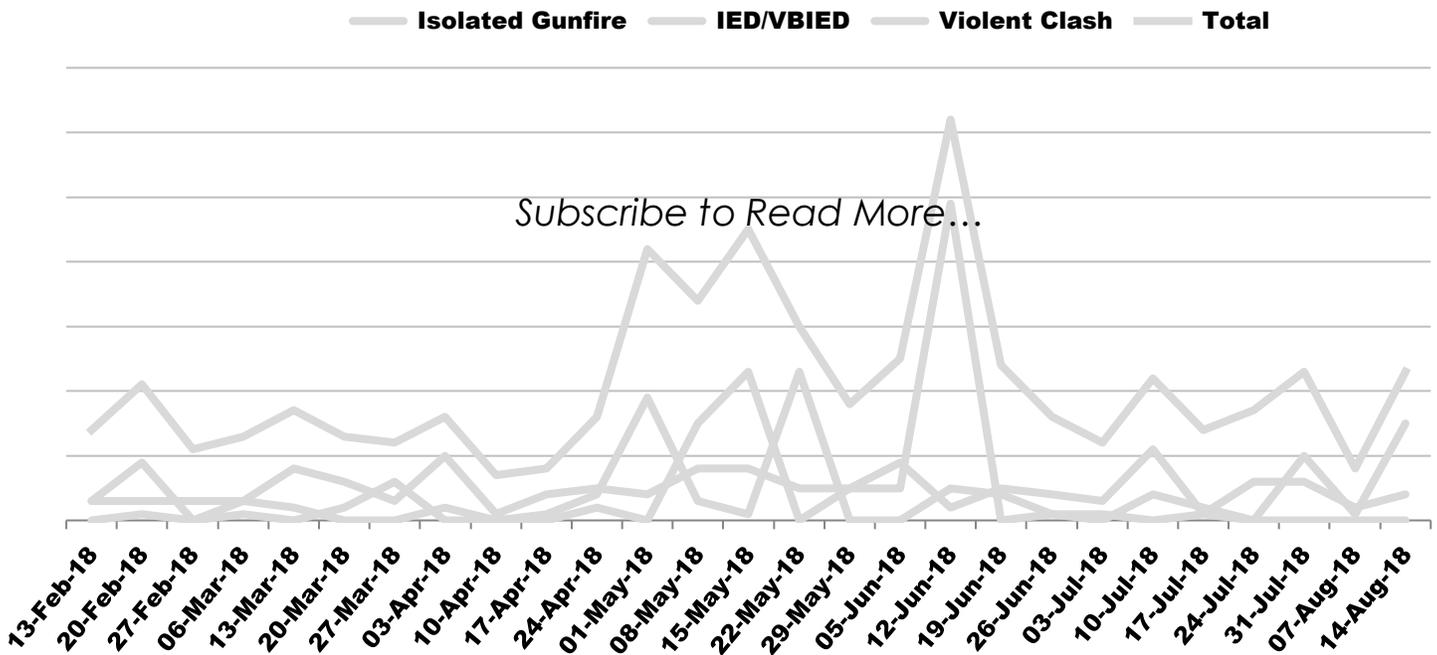
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 23 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 8 deaths reported last week and 23 the week before. This week, clashes between the LNA and fleeing Derna militants in the Al-Wahat (Ajdabiya) National District represented the majority of fatalities recorded. There was a decrease in the number of fatalities recorded in western Libya relatively compared with the past week. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 9 cases of isolated gunfire, 5 protests, 2 robberies, 2 road closures, an attack by knife, a raid, and a total of 2 bodies found.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 19 incidents, including 15 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell recorded in Tripoli an isolated gunfire incident resulting from a family dispute. Reports suggest a man was shot and killed in Tripoli's Al-Gbailia area, Ain Zara, on 12 Aug. The latest reports suggest the victim was killed by his brother using an AK-47 rifle, and due to a family dispute. Disputes between family members and neighbours are common and often result in similar incidents due to the proliferation of weapons across the country. Meanwhile an unidentified militia attacked the Swani Center for disability and rehabilitation, forcing staff and patients to evacuate the building in Tripoli's Al-Swani area at approximately 1000hrs on 13 Aug. On 14 Aug, four unidentified assailants riding a black Hyundai Azera vehicle with tinted windows robbed a man in Tripoli's Fallah area at approximately 1100hrs on 14 Aug. Reports suggest that the assailants stole 6,500 LYD in cash and 2 mobile phones. In a separate incident, reports suggest a man was accidentally shot and killed in front of Al-Jumhouria Bank branch in Tripoli's Tajoura area on 15 Aug. The man was killed by indiscriminate gunfire fired by the militia securing the bank. Whispering Bell sources reported that members affiliated with the Al-Bugra militia were securing the bank and likely responsible for the killing of the customer.

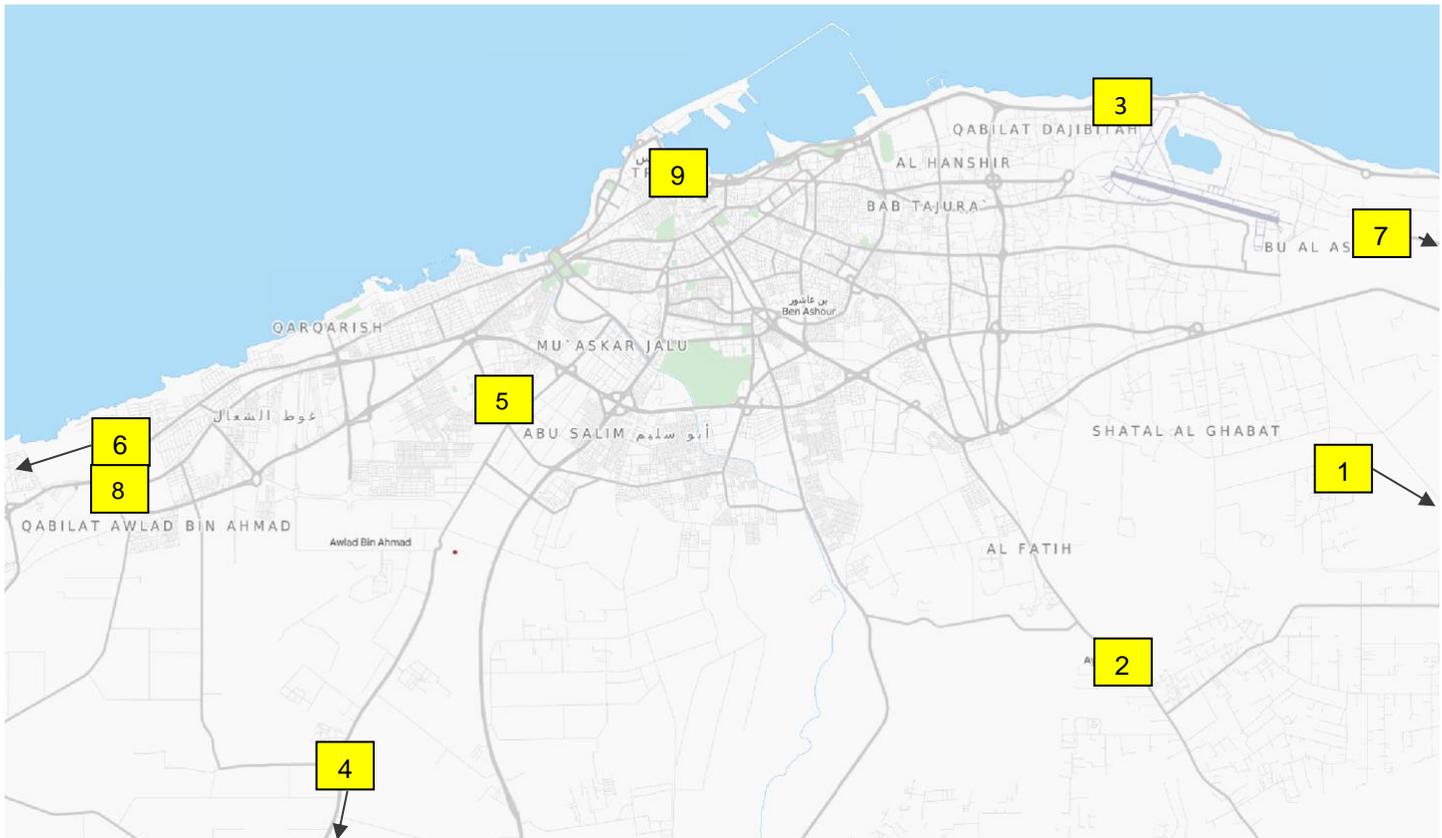
The week in Central Libya was marked by Sirte security forces dismantling an improvised explosive device (IED) and uncovering multiple dead bodies in Sirte's 40 District, West of the city. The IED and the bodies found were likely from past combat operations.

Turning to southern Libya, Whispering Bell noted a relative decrease in the number of kidnappings and other incidents, though Chadian and Sudanese mercenaries and rebel continue to operate unhindered.

In Eastern Libya, Derna, pockets of militants continue to operate across the city. Reports suggest a Libyan National Army (LNA) convoy of 3 vehicles came under heavy fire in Derna's western entrance, near the 1805 Resort, on 14 Aug. The reports suggest the LNA's Tarik Ibn Ziyad Brigade subsequently moved in to "sweep" the area and eliminate remaining militants.

## 4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

### Tensions prevail between Al-Bugra and SDF-aligned militias



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (11 Aug) 2 bodies of women found with signs of gunshot in Alqooh
2. (12 Aug) Man shot and killed by relative using AK-47 in Ain Zara
3. (13 Aug) Angry locals block Beach Road over detention of 5 individuals
4. (13 Aug) Unidentified militia attacks disability centre in Swani
5. (14 Aug) Unidentified assailants rob man in Fellah
6. (14 Aug) Anti-GNA protest in Janzour
7. (15 Aug) Man killed in front of Jumhuriya Bank in Tajoura
8. (17 Aug) Female Jumhuriya Bank customers protest and block road
9. (17 Aug) Protestors condemn CBL governor Sadik Al-Kabir

#### Militia tensions & road closures

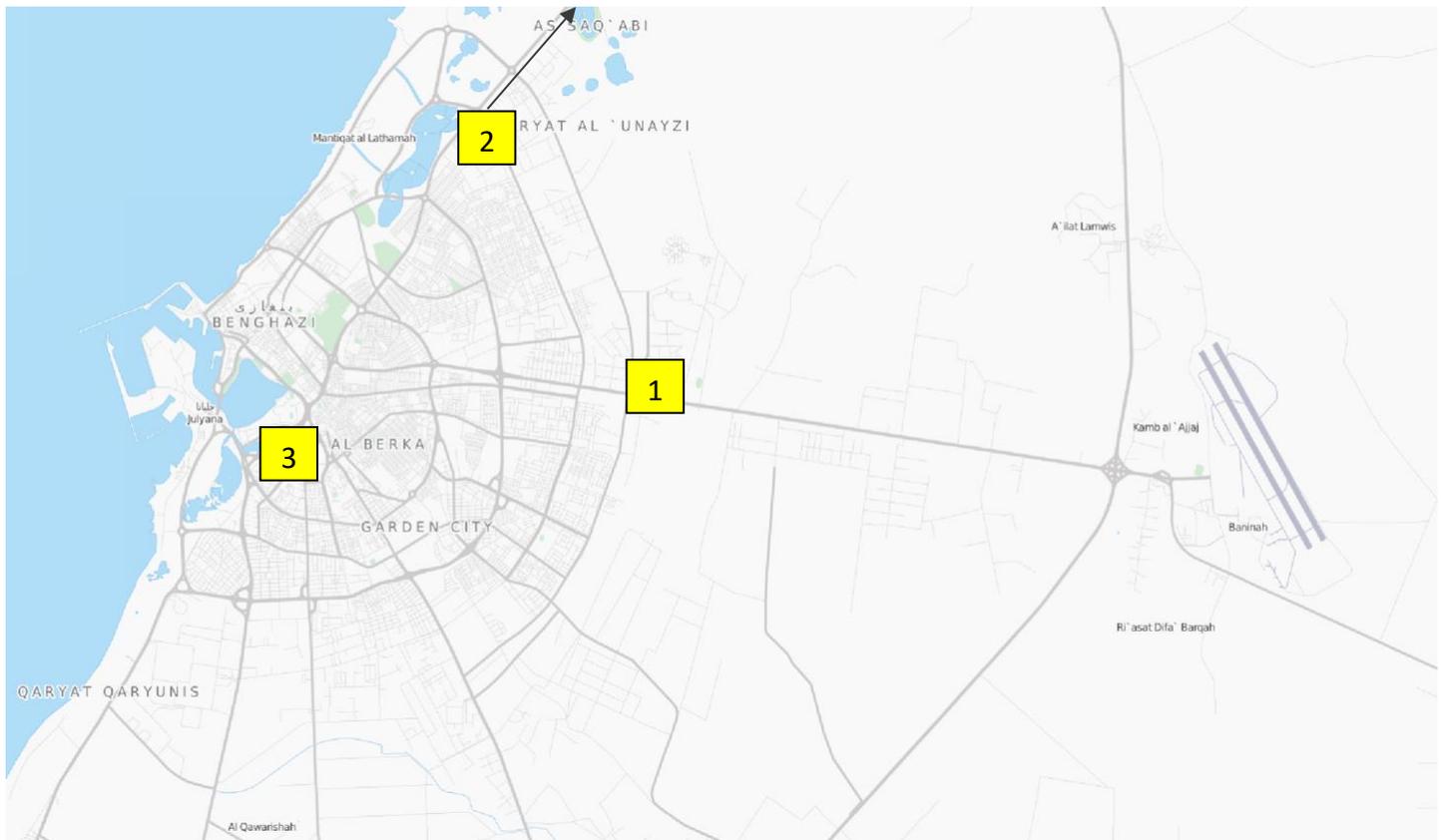
Reports suggest the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) closed the Beach Road again East of Tripoli's Mitiga Airport and at the Sban roundabout at approximately 1900hrs on 17 Aug. The Beach Road has been closed and reopened multiple times over the past week. This is due to tensions over the detention of 5 locals by the Al-Bugra militia. The situation remain tense in the area between the Al-Bugra militias and other Tripoli-based militias, including the SDF and Nawasi militia. On 15 Aug the Tripoli Security Directorate reopened the Beach Road West of Tripoli's Mitiga Airport at approximately 1600hrs after it was closed by angry protesters over the detention of 5 locals by the Al-Bugra militia in Tripoli's Tajoura area. Meanwhile, reports suggest the Beach Road was then closed East of Mitiga Airport and at the Sban roundabout at approximately 1830hrs on 15 Aug. Later at night on 15 Aug, reports suggest militiamen affiliated to the Al-Bugra militia temporarily blocked the Coastal road near Bevi traffic lights following the Beach Road closure by the SDF.

#### Militias kidnap officials

An unidentified militia kidnapped the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Afriqiya Airlines, Abubaker Al-Qadi, in an unidentified area of Tripoli in the evening on 12 Aug. Thus far information related to the incident remains unclear. Afriqiya Airlines condemned the kidnapping and threatened to enter strike action. Some reports indicate the kidnapping was due to internal issues with the administration. Meanwhile, reports suggest gunmen affiliated with the Ghneiwa militia kidnapped the General Director of the Al-Nouran Bank after storming his home in Tripoli's Damascus district and taking him to an unknown location at night on 13 Aug. He was reportedly kidnapped for refusing to sign some forged documents. If confirmed, the involvement of the Ghneiwa militia would lend credence to reports that some Ghneiwa militiamen have recently engaged in multiple in criminal acts and extortion attempts.

## 5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

### Indiscriminate gunfire kills Saiqa Special Forces soldier



#### KEY INCIDENTS

1. (12 Aug) Death of Saiqa Special Forces soldier
2. (12 Aug) Chadian stabbed to death East of the city
3. (18 Aug) Indiscriminate gunfire injures Sudanese

#### Death of Saiqa Forces soldier

Indiscriminate gunfire resulted in the death of a Saiqa Special Forces soldier in a military camp in Benghazi's Abu Atni area on 12 Aug. The soldier reportedly died on his way to the hospital.

#### Indiscriminate gunfire and robbery

Reports suggest indiscriminate gunfire resulted in the injury of a Sudanese national in Benghazi's Keish area on 18 Aug. The man was reportedly in a stable condition after being transferred to a nearby hospital. Indiscriminate gunfire remains a common cause of fatalities and casualties across Libya, particularly in Benghazi, due to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, unidentified armed assailants attacked a Chadian shepherd and stabbed him to death during a robbery East of Benghazi on 12 Aug.

#### UNSMIL chooses HQ location

The Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Ghassan Salame, stated the Mission has chosen the location of its HQ in Benghazi, which is planned to reopen in upcoming weeks. The announcement came during Salame's meeting with the Mayor of Benghazi on 15 Aug. UNSMIL announced on 02 Mar that preparations were underway to reopen its office in Benghazi after closing in 2014 due to the deterioration of the security situation. The reopening, when confirmed, would be a good indicator of the security situation and the potential for operations to resume fully in the city.

## 6. What's next

### Internal divisions within GNA over planned economic reforms

#### POLITICAL FORECAST

Despite a loose commitment to hold elections by Dec 2018, neither the logistical framework nor the constitutional basis are currently in place to facilitate such an outcome. The House of Representatives (HoR) postponed yet again voting on the constitution referendum with reports of shots fired outside the HoR building. The HoR held a formal session in the presence of 90 members, though it failed to vote on the constitution referendum bill on 13 Aug. The HoR agreed, however, on the quorum for voting and decided that the referendum bill will require absolute majority. The Chairman of the High National Elections Commission (HNEC), Emad Al-Sayah, corroborated the idea that elections are unlikely to be held in Dec 2018, stating the Commission would have 8 months to prepare for elections upon approval of the Constitution. Elections would therefore more likely be held in Oct 2019. Meanwhile, Aref Nayed relaunched his political movement and declared he will stand for Libya's presidential elections, though uncertainty remains over when these will be held. Beyond this, issues related to the fair distribution of Libya's oil and gas revenues, perceived as a critical challenge to overcome and source of multiple conflicts, will likely persist and shows no signs of abating.

#### WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

“In an article for *Al Monitor*, the author, Kirill Semenov, discusses Russia's position in Libya and its alleged reluctance to take sides between the GNA and LNA. “Russia's own record of direct military aid for the LNA is murky: injured LNA soldiers received medical treatment in Russian hospitals and the Russian government authorized Belarus to supply the UAE with Russian-made weapons such as Mi-24/35 helicopters that were later handed over to the LNA. Besides, some Russian private military contractors such as the RSB Group have worked in LNA-controlled areas; however, their activities reportedly included only demining of civilian industry objects in Benghazi — in particular, a factory that had belonged to the Libyan Cement Company.... At the same time, Russia has also been developing a dynamic relationship with the GNA in Tripoli. The parties have been establishing cooperation in the security field, while bilateral interagency contacts between them are actually more intensive than those between Moscow and Tobruk.” He adds that the LNA's “interest in supporting the LNA is reinforced by Hifter's proclaimed willingness to buy Russian weapons in bulk if it is legalized and freed from the sanctions, as well as by his capability to provide in Eastern Libyan ports such as Tobruk and Benghazi, which Russian military leaders have already visited, for military bases.”

#### SECURITY FORECAST

Increased militia movements and potential tensions between Al-Bugra and other Tripoli-based militias are likely to persist in the capital city. Tensions could escalate during the upcoming Eid Adha holiday period. Meanwhile, Al-Kaniat militia's presence in Tarhuna could escalate tensions, especially amid unconfirmed reports of a mobilization by some Misrata and BDB elements. In the wider Western region, fuel smuggling will remain a significant hurdle in stabilizing the security situation, especially following the dissolution of the Fuel and Gas Crisis Committee. Tensions could escalate at the Zawiya refinery and/or between militias in Zuwara and Sabratha. In Libya's South, Chadian and Sudanese mercenaries and rebels will continue to operate unhindered. Meanwhile, LNA units in the Oil Crescent will likely remain vigilant following suspicious movements North of Al Jufra National District and unconfirmed reports of an imminent attack by Jathran and BDB elements. An attack during Eid Adha, regardless of its location, would have significant repercussions on Libya's current output. In Derna, the LNA will continue to engage fleeing militants, while indiscriminate gunfire and incidents related to narcotics remain widespread in Benghazi.

#### LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an interview published on the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Frederic Wehrey discusses Libya's situation ahead of the planned elections. Wehrey states “Theatrical and symbolic gestures like the Macron summit, with this incredibly ambitious timeline for elections, don't move us forward. The proposed elections were seen as a way out of the impasse, but they contain the seeds of even greater instability. Premature elections could open the field for more factional conflict, especially since some key players who wield considerable armed force were not present at the summit. It's unclear if Libyans are going to be ready for this in terms of voting laws, the constitutional draft, or security. Elections without a constitutional framework are opposed by many parties as [potentially] setting up another transitional government that is going to be contested or even an authoritarian ruler for life. There are all sorts of scenarios in which this can go badly, and though elections, based on the Paris summit, [are due to be held] December 10, that is unlikely to happen, in my view.” Wehrey adds “the potential for a way out is there. Much of this hinges on the political maturity and vision of Libya's leaders and also the wisdom and unity of the international community. It also requires institutional reforms, like unifying economic institutions and dealing with militia power while rebuilding the security sector.”

# About Whispering Bell



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