



1. The Big Picture

Further GNA setbacks in West ahead of planned elections

This week, the Government of National Accord (GNA) faced further setbacks as anti-GNA local sentiment grew and following a controversial televised interview where Italian Ambassador to Libya, Giuseppe Perrone, voiced strong opposition to elections under current conditions. Perrone's comments sparked anger among locals, resulting in protests in Tripoli and Sorman.

Beyond grievances over power cuts, rising prices of goods and ongoing liquidity shortages, the latest allegations of GNA-condoned Italian interference in Libyan affairs will further undermine the GNA's public image while strengthening the East's political position.

There are growing perceptions in the West that the GNA is focused entirely on ensuring its survival. There are local concerns that such GNA actions, allegedly carried out to ensure its survival, could pave the way for a foreign-led intervention similar to the 2011 scenario in Libya. Locals increasingly associate GNA moves with Italian-sanctioned political manoeuvres. Thus far, there is mounting evidence to suggest the prevailing anti-GNA sentiment is increasing calls from the capital city to hold elections. However, it remains unclear how such calls will impact polls, should elections be held.

Regardless, it will become increasingly difficult for the GNA PM, Fayeza Serraj, to maintain his position in any upcoming Libyan government. Meanwhile, Sadiq Al-Kabir continues to push ahead with economic reforms. Plans to change the official dinar exchange rate, if implemented, could help alleviate rising cost of living, which according to reports rose by 2.75 % in June across the country. The GNA will likely push for an urgent fix to the current situation, including the allocation of cash to households, to gain some popularity locally.

From a security standpoint, some militias have the potential to exploit the current situation and the GNA's weakening grip over the security situation to engage in criminal activity. Recently, there has been noticeable increase in carjacking incidents and other criminal activity. There has been a surge in incidents involving Ghneiwa militiamen. Commanders likely have little to no oversight over militiamen nominally under their command, though there is no indication these incidents are part of a strategic effort to turn against the GNA. There is a possibility that the Ghneiwa militia is feeling slightly marginalized and currently in a "grey zone". There could be an attempt to maximise chances of survival should political outcomes change, and especially amid decreasing GNA popularity. Beyond this, there is also the potential for anti-GNA sentiment to translate into direct attacks targeting officials. On 03 Aug, unidentified assailants murdered Fayeza Serraj's driver, Saleh Tbaykya, on Tripoli's Gorji Road. It remains unclear, however, whether the murder was indeed tied to anti-GNA sentiment.

In brief, should current conditions persist, the GNA would likely implement urgent economic reforms to temporarily ease living conditions in Tripoli. However, it faces a dilemma; to maintain its international legitimacy, it must implement measures and pursue policies that could undermine its image locally.

KEY POINTS

- Prevailing anti-GNA sentiment
- Potential impact on Tripoli security
- Impact on polls, if held, unclear



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2. National Security Map

South Korea deploys warship to Libya following video of kidnapped national

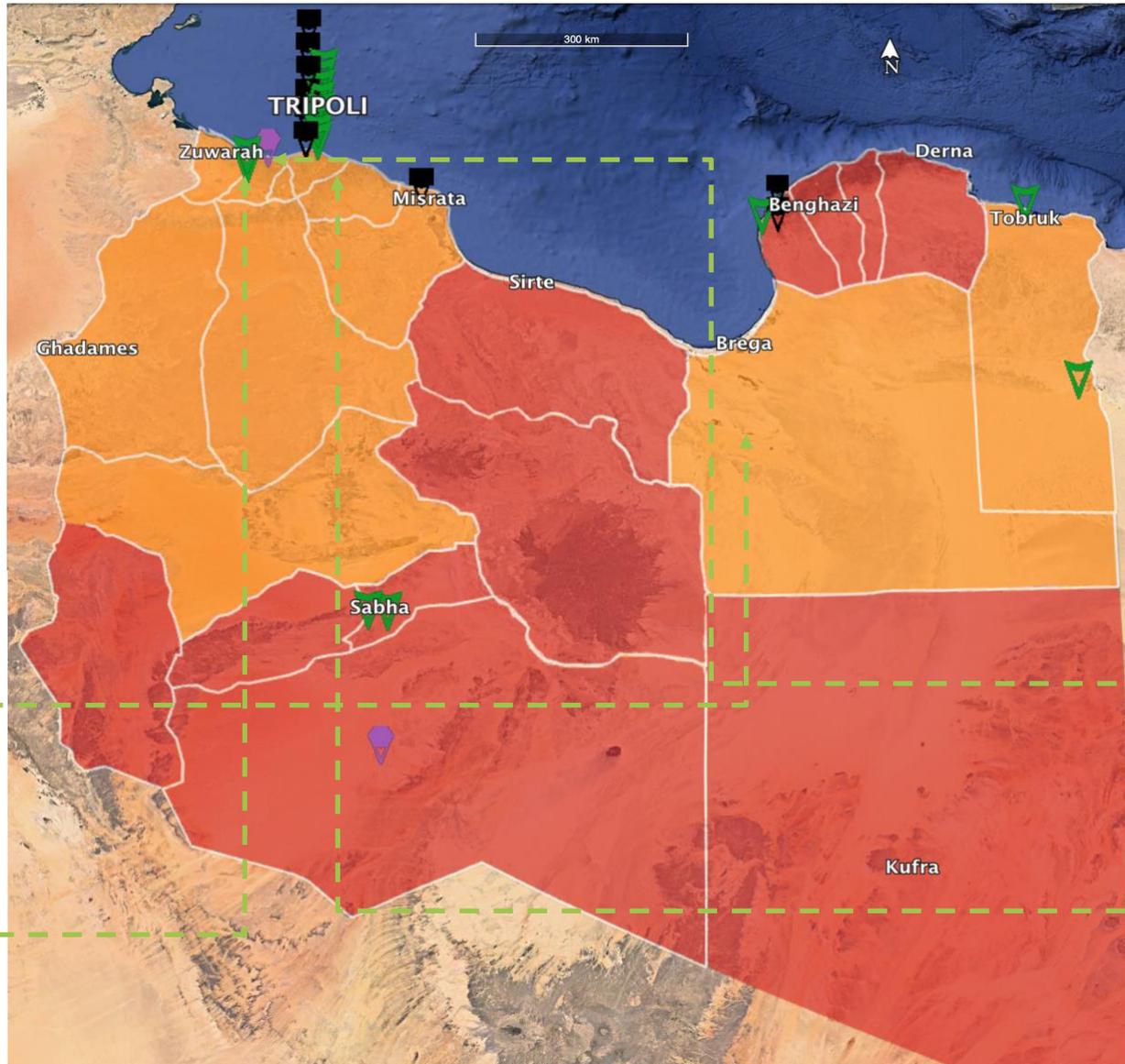
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



The South Korean government deployed a naval ship “Munmu the Great” to Libya to protect commercial vessels while “preparing for all possibilities including the need for military support”, according to official reports on 02 Aug. The decision is likely a show of force following the release of a video showing the Korean technician and three Filipino nationals who were kidnapped on 06 Jul from the Man-Made River Al-Hassouna plant site near Ash Shwayrif.

On 01 Aug at 1245 hrs, the coastal road from Abu Issa, west of Zawiyah, to Surman was closed due to clashes between the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the western region and local militias responsible for smuggling operations, supported by militia leader “Abu Obaida Al-Zawey”. Initial reports indicate that the CID ambushed the militia in the Abu Issa area and killed two militia members who were brothers. Local reports suggested that there were heavy sounds of shooting by light and medium weapons during the clashes, which resulted in the death of 2 CID members and 5 militiamen. On 02 Aug, the coastal road between Az-Zāwiyah and Surman was reopened, though locals continue to advise travellers to temporarily avoid operating as tensions could escalate.

There were multiple reports of arrests and kidnapping incidents in the Garaboli area from 03 Aug to 05 Aug. Al-Kani militia, from Tarhuna and currently stationed in parts of Garaboli, is suspected of being responsible. Whispering Bell advises travellers to operate with caution.

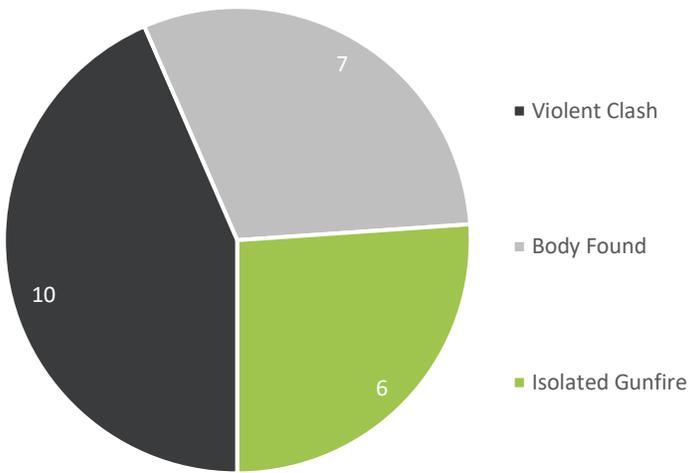
Local reports suggest the Tahadi Gas Field, operated by Sirte Oil Company for Production, Manufacturing of Oil and Gas (SOC) resumed its production following a halt in operations due to power cuts on 03 Aug. Additional reports suggest the production of condensers of 6500 barrels per day (bpd) also resumed. The Tahadi Gas field is one of Libya’s largest natural gas fields and is the main feeder for power plants in the North of Benghazi and the Port of Al-Zuwaytinah.

Reports indicate two dead bodies were found with signs of torture in Ajaylat in the morning on 04 Aug. The victims are believed to have been killed during a carjacking incident. Other reports suggest the victims were kidnapped for ransom. Three suspects have reportedly been arrested.

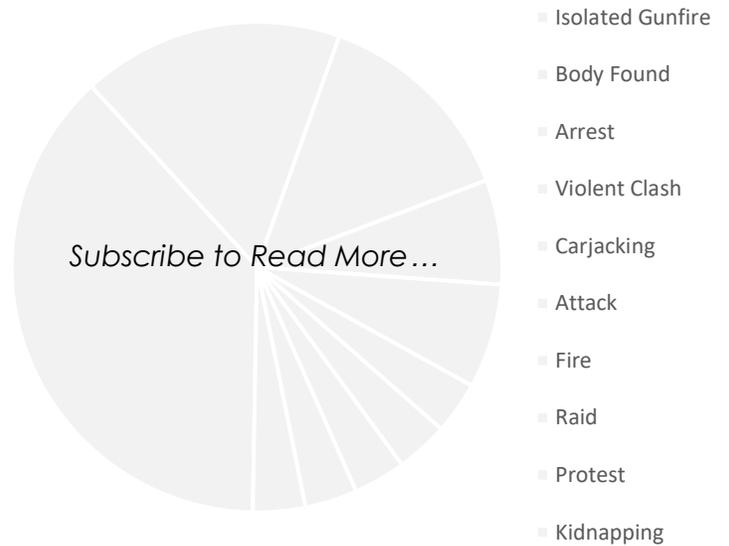
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Slight increase in nationwide fatalities recorded due to violent clashes

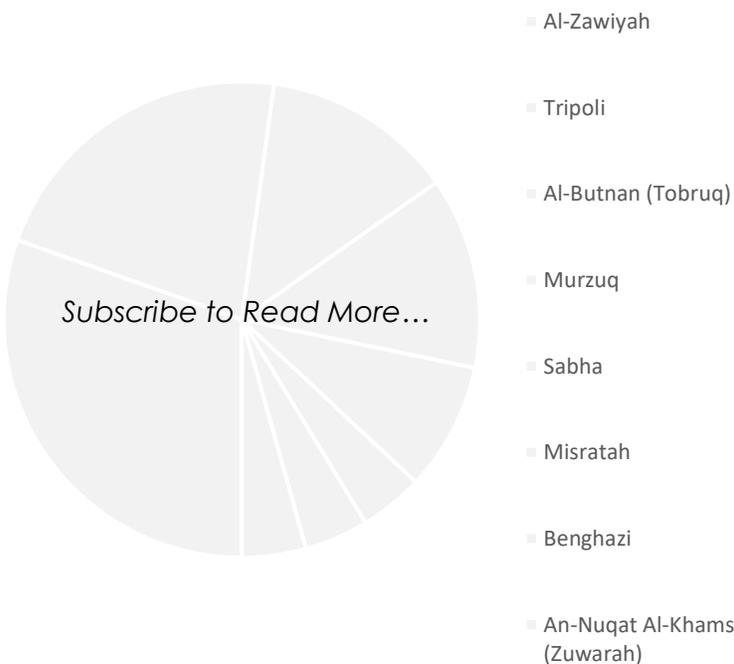
Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



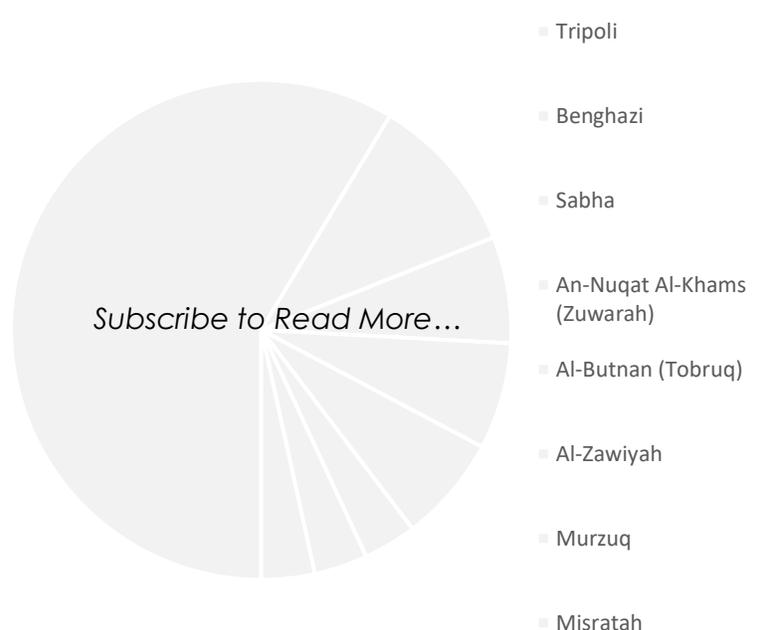
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



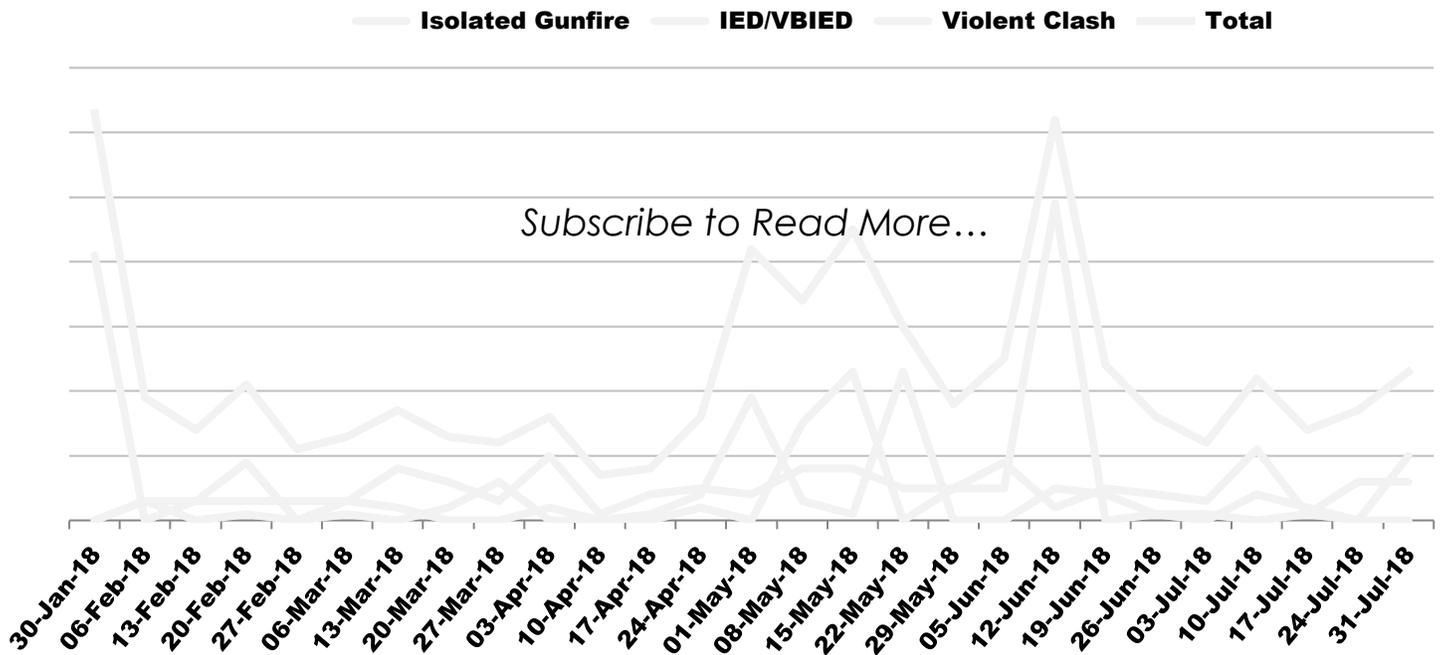
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 17 deaths reported last week and 14 the week before. This week, there was a slight increase in the nationwide fatalities due to violent clashes in Zawiya and Qatrun. Zawiya stood as the national district with the highest number of fatalities recorded. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 11 cases of isolated gunfire, a total of 7 bodies found, 2 carjacking incidents, 4 arrests, and a kidnapping.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 21 incidents, including 17 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. Whispering Bell recorded an increase in criminal activity. Two girls were shot and killed by unidentified assailants inside their home in Al-Seyaheyya area of Tripoli on the afternoon of 31 July. The motive behind the killing remains unconfirmed. Local sources reported increased security in the area following the incident, with the main road being temporarily blocked by Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade CP. Meanwhile, Whispering Bell recorded a surge in reports of Ghneiwa militiamen engaging in criminal activity across the capital city. Reports suggest the Ghneiwa militia raided the Al-Ahli Factory, a textile and clothing factory, in Tripoli's Al-Hadba Al-Badry area at approximately 0200hrs on 02 Aug. Beyond this, unidentified assailants kidnapped a man in Tripoli's Al-Hadba area at approximately 0200hrs on 05 Aug. Local reports suggest the man was riding a Toyota Hilux vehicle and there is a possibility the kidnappers are affiliated to the Ghneiwa militia.

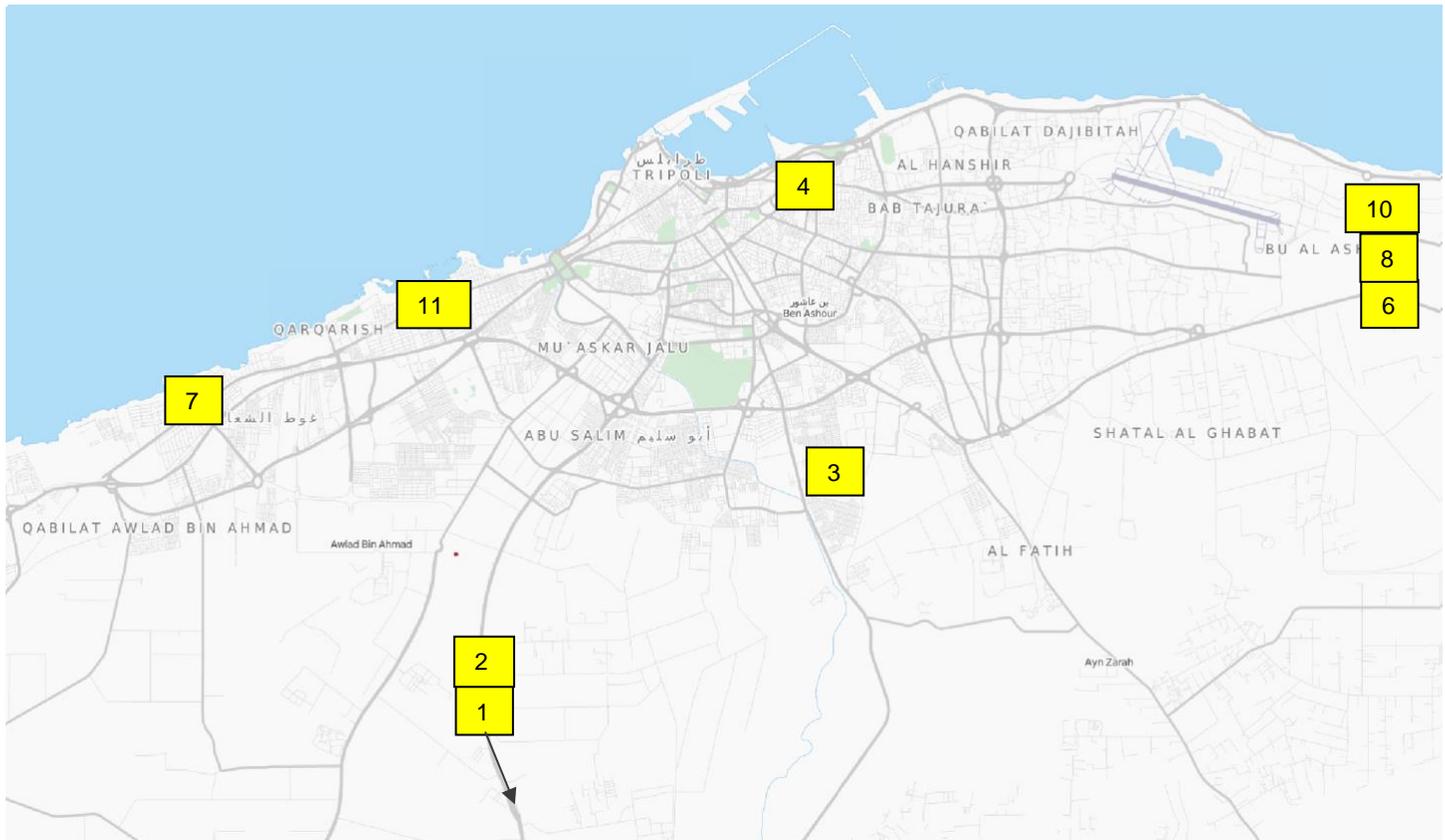
This week in Central Libya was marked by reports suggesting unidentified assailants robbed a high-voltage cable from the Taweelah area, 10 km East of Sirte, which feeds large areas of Taweelah and Sawaw, on 04 Aug. The assailants reportedly stole the cable during a 9-hour power cut across the city. Robberies of wires and electrical cables remain common across Sirte. Last week, unidentified assailants stole electrical cables in the Abu Njeim area.

Turning to southern Libya, in Sabha, the body of a journalist and photographer of Fasanea, a Sabha-based newspaper, Musa Abdulkareem, was found dumped on the side of the road in Sabha's Al-Thanawia neighborhood on 31 Jul. Initial reports suggest the victim's body was found with signs of torture and 13 gunshots. Neither the identity of the assailant(s) nor the motive behind the killing are known.

In Libya's East, indiscriminate gunfire continues to pose a threat to civilians in Benghazi. Local reports from 03 Aug suggest an individual was shot by indiscriminate gunfire in Benghazi's Al-Wheishi area. Additional reports suggest the victim was shot whilst filling cooking gas. Meanwhile, the LNA continues to face pockets of extremists in Derna and multiple security incidents were reported despite the proclaimed end of the offensive.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Al-Bugra establishes multiple irregular CPs; SDF kills Al-Bugra affiliate



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (28 Jul) Unidentified assailants attack control station
2. (29 Jul) Man found shot dead near airport bridge
3. (31 Jul) Drive-by shooting injures man in Al-Hadba
4. (31 Jul) Al-Bugra militia arrest two men from Souq Al-Joma'a
5. (31 Jul) Security forces arrest kidnappers
6. (31 Jul) Sounds of gunfire and explosions in Tajoura
7. (31 Jul) 2 girls shot inside their house in Al-Seyahiya
8. (31 Jul) SDF kill man affiliated with Al-Bugra in Tajoura
9. (31 Jul) 4 journalists detained & later released
- 10.(01 Aug) Man killed in dispute with Al-Daman Battalion
- 11.(01 Aug) Carjacking in Hai Al-Andalus area

SDF & Al-Bugra militia tensions

Reports suggest Al-Bugra militia established an irregular checkpoint on the Coastal Road between the Ispan Roundabout and Al-Andalusi Roundabout in Tripoli's Tajoura area, arresting two men from the Souq Al Jum'aa area, at approximately 0000hrs on 31 Jul. Additional reports suggest sounds of gunfire and explosions were heard in the area. The Al-Bugra militia reportedly inspected ID's, particularly locals from the Souq Al Jum'aa area. Whispering Bell has recently recorded a surge in Al-Bugra militia activity. The militia could be attempting to exploit growing anti-Government of National Accord (GNA) sentiment to pressure the SDF to release prisoners allegedly held in the Mitiga prison complex. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, the Deterrence Apparatus killed a man from the Al-Ghrarat area near Tripoli's Ispan roundabout on 01 Aug. Initial reports suggest the man was affiliated with the Al-Bugra militia and was one of the members responsible for establishing irregular checkpoints near the Ispan roundabout.

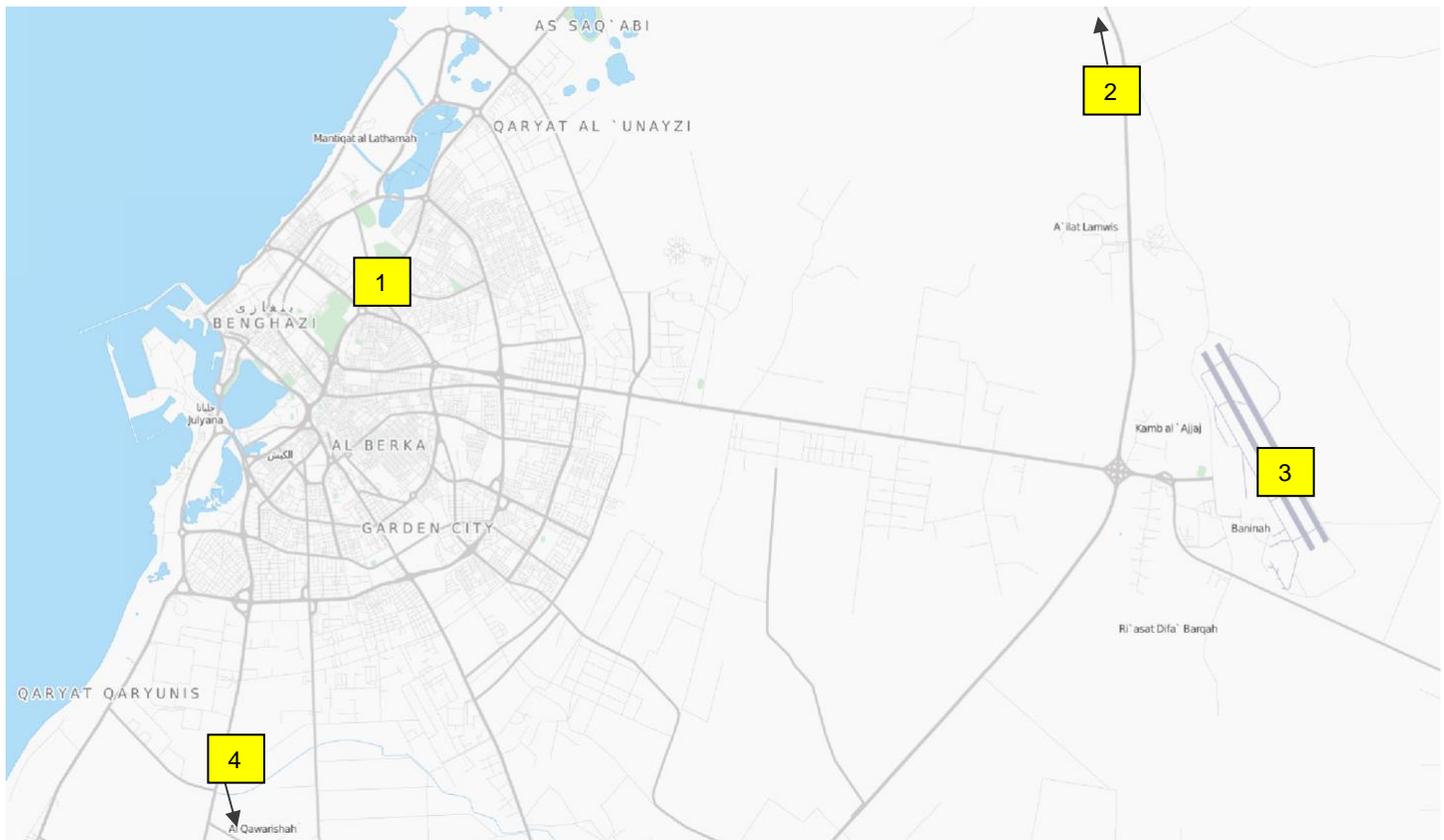
This corroborates Whispering Bell's assessment of potential acts of retaliation by the Deterrence Apparatus in response to a recent surge in Al-Bugra militia activity, including the establishment of irregular checkpoints and the arrest of Souq Al-Juma'a locals.

Sporadic security incidents

Two unidentified men reportedly shot and subsequently injured a man in a drive-by shooting in Tripoli's Al-Hadba area at approximately 0915hrs on 31 Jul. Initial reports suggest the incident stands as a targeted assassination attempt. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, reports suggest two masked gunmen driving a Kia Cerato 2013 vehicle with no plate and tinted windows carjacked a Hyundai Accent 2012 vehicle in Tripoli's Hay Al-Andalus area at approximately 0625hrs on 03 Aug. Local sources in Tripoli's Salah Al-Dein area reported an increase in suspicious tinted vehicle movements at night.

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

Indiscriminate gunfire results in civilian casualties across Benghazi



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (29 Jul) Indiscriminate gunfire injures man in Al-Salmani
2. (29 Jul) Man's body found in Sidi Khalifa
3. (31 Jul) Employee strike at Benina Airport
4. (03 Aug) Indiscriminate gunfire injures local in Al-Wheishi

Indiscriminate gunfire

Reports suggest indiscriminate gunfire resulted in the injury of a man in Benghazi's Al-Salmani area on 29 Jul. Meanwhile, in a separate incident, local reports from 03 Aug suggest an individual was shot by indiscriminate gunfire in Benghazi's Al-Wheishi area. Additional reports suggest the victim was shot whilst filling cooking gas. Indiscriminate gunfire remains widespread across Benghazi and often results in civilian casualties.

Man's body found

Meanwhile, in a separate incident, security forces found the body of a man behind a poultry shop in Benghazi's Sidi Khalifa area on 29 Jul. According to reports, the victim's body was found with signs of gunshots to his chest and abdomen. The man was found three days following his murder.

Benina Airport strike

On 31 Jul, flights were suspended at Benghazi's Benina Airport with the exception of Buraq Airlines flights, due to a strike organized by Libyan Ground Handling Company workers over unpaid salaries. According to local media reports, the workers have not been paid for 9 months. Airport closures fueled by employee grievances remain common across Libyan cities. The latest reports suggest the airport reopened and flights resumed on 02 Aug after employees ended the strike following assurances to receive delayed salaries.

6. What's next GNA to implement economic reforms as pressure builds up in West

POLITICAL FORECAST

There is mounting rhetoric from the East describing a focus on the constitution before elections as an attempt by Islamist factions across the country to advance their agenda and delay presidential elections. Postponing the House of Representatives (HoR) vote has slightly tilted the balance in favour of the narrative prioritizing the holding of elections prior to the constitutional basis. This has also undermined confidence in the HoR's ability to find a solution to the constitutional problem. Meanwhile, Italy continues to oppose France's push to hold elections by 10 Dec 2018, advocating instead the necessity to develop a constitutional basis and stabilize the security situation prior to holding elections. In a statement, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte expressed his willingness to organize a conference with US President Donald Trump to stabilize Libya and discuss the country's security, economic, and political issues. The conference would be the latest evidence of Italy's aspirations to establish itself as the main interlocutor for Libya. Italy is in direct competition with France to solve the Libyan crisis. The conference, if held, would be projected as an alternative to the Paris Summit.

SECURITY FORECAST

This week saw an increase in criminal activity and sporadic security incidents across the capital city. Militia members and/or criminals have the potential to exploit the current situation and the GNA's weakening grip over the security situation to engage in criminal activity. INTERPOL will reportedly resume operations from Tripoli after the GNA settled unpaid contributions to the organization. While the development will help combat terrorism, weapons and human trafficking, and other criminal activity, it could also upset local militias in the West should the GNA begin arresting individuals. Meanwhile, tensions are high West of the capital city and near Zawiyah, where local militias involved in smuggling will continue to clash with authorities. The ongoing closure of the Ras Jdair border crossing could also have wider ramifications on the security situation in the West. In Libya's South, Chadian mercenaries continue to operate in small groups with shifting allegiances. As the East-West divide widens, factions in Libya will increasingly resort to Chadian mercenaries to carry out operations on their behalf. Beyond, in Libya's East, though clashes in Derna have decreased, LNA forces will likely continue to fight remnants of the Derna Protection Force (DPF) in the city, whilst Benghazi continues to witness sporadic security incidents and indiscriminate gunfire.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "Sputnik", the author, Ekaterina Blinova, discusses how Trump has set France and Italy on a "collision course" over Libya, whilst highlighting the comments of the Italian journalist and political observer, Daniele Pozzati. "By recognizing Italy's prominent role in the stabilization of Libya — a role which will materialize this coming September with the organization, in Rome, of an international conference over the future of Libya — Donald Trump has chosen to back Giuseppe Conte instead of Emmanuel Macron in Libya, and thus set Rome and Paris on a collision course," Italian journalist and political observer Daniele Pozzati told Sputnik. According to the journalist, Washington and Italy appear to be "ready to take on France and Germany on a number of issues, especially those related to immigration and the handling of the economy." According to the journalist: "Conte had something more specific in mind: The organization, this coming autumn, in Rome, of an international conference on Libya — a country which, following NATO's ill-conceived 2011 military operation, still lacks a central political authority. "Judging from Trump's recognition of "Italy's leadership role in the stabilization of Libya and North Africa", Conte has accomplished his mission to secure US backing for a leading role of Italy in Libya, the observer underscored." said Blinova.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for "Asharq Al-Awsat", the author, Khalid Mahmoud, highlights the comments of the Head of the Justice and Construction Party, Mohamed Sowan, over his dissatisfaction with the Parliament's postponement of the vote on the constitutional referendum. "Libya's Muslim Brotherhood has criticized the Parliament's decision to postpone a vote on the constitutional referendum in the country. Mohamed Sowan, head of the Justice and Construction Party, the political wing of Libya's Muslim Brotherhood, said in a statement on Tuesday that the House of Representatives has been "robbed" of its free will. He claimed that the group, which controls the parliament, has become a tool for certain regional countries aiming to sabotage Libya's political process. The parliament has also failed to convene an effective session for more than a year, Sowan added. "Some parties backed by regional countries don't want political stability in Libya and don't want Libya to overcome its crisis," Sowan said in televised statements. "The lack of international unity has allowed some small countries to play a bigger role in Libya," he stressed. Sowan's scathing attack on the parliament came after a controversial session it held on Tuesday when its members failed, after two days of deliberations, to vote on the new constitution and pave way for presidential and parliamentary elections that the UN and France are seeking to hold by the end of 2018 despite Italy's opposition." said Mahmoud.

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