



1. The Big Picture

Alliances could form as Tripoli clashes reach critical stage

This week was marked by a full resumption of clashes in Tripoli's South, while reinforcements from Misrata raise concerns over prospect for clashes to expand further North.

There is mounting evidence to suggest the clashes are moving away from the initial "tactical phase" and towards a more complex web of alliances that could exacerbate tensions. Factions are no longer mainly concerned with opportunist gains and short-term objectives, including seizing military camps and other assets from Tripoli's main militias. The tentative ceasefire has enabled Tripoli's militias and Al-Kaniat's coalition to restructure and mobilize additional resources. The latest wave of hostilities was marked by growing political rhetoric from all sides, including Salah Badi's Sumoud Brigade and other militia factions. Some have even worked towards a more compelling political rationale for military operations.

Meanwhile, the Misrata Military Council's (MMC) participation stood as the latest evidence of the potential for clashes to move into a more complex phase where tentative alliances would shift. MMC and Bunyan Al-Marsous (BAM) are divided in their support for the clashes. More moderate Misrata-based factions refused to get involved and denounced the MMC announcement, claiming it does not represent the city of Misrata. Regardless, the development and any other escalation would prompt more moderate Misrata factions to join the conflict in the short term.

The clashes in Tripoli remain limited to the South in Wadi Al-Rabei, Ain Zara, Salah Al-Dein, Khallat Al-Forjan, Hadba Al-Mashrou' and airport road areas, though any new alliance or support to

either sides would result in rapid advances further North. A situation where Salah Badi and Tarhuna militias receive significant additional support from the other Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)-affiliated elements and pro-General National Congress (GNC) militias from Misrata, Al-Zawiya, or Gharian, would force Tripoli militias to retreat further North, potentially leading to the collapse of the current security landscape.

Overall, should alliances materialize, they would clearly structure lines of the conflict along political, ideological, and/or tribal divides. Factions' threat perception, assessment of likelihood of survival, and openness / opposition to cooperate with forces from outside Tripoli, will help determine the potential scenarios that could unfold in the short to medium term. For the Government of National Accord (GNA), the latest MMC move is likely perceived as a direct threat to its survival, which could prompt it to seek additional support from Misrata and Zintan.

While the Libyan National Army (LNA) categorically denied any involvement in the clashes, any rift or internal discord among Tripoli's main militias would benefit Haftar and strengthen his posture and negotiating leverage in any future political settlement. A direct LNA intervention is unlikely, though willingness to cooperate with Haftar could gradually become a viable option that Tripoli militias would be compelled to consider to ensure their survival.

KEY POINTS

- Misrata factions divided over clashes
- Alliances could form in short term
- LNA denied any involvement



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2. National Security Map

PFG guards end protest at Wafa Field Airport; prominent militant killed in Derna

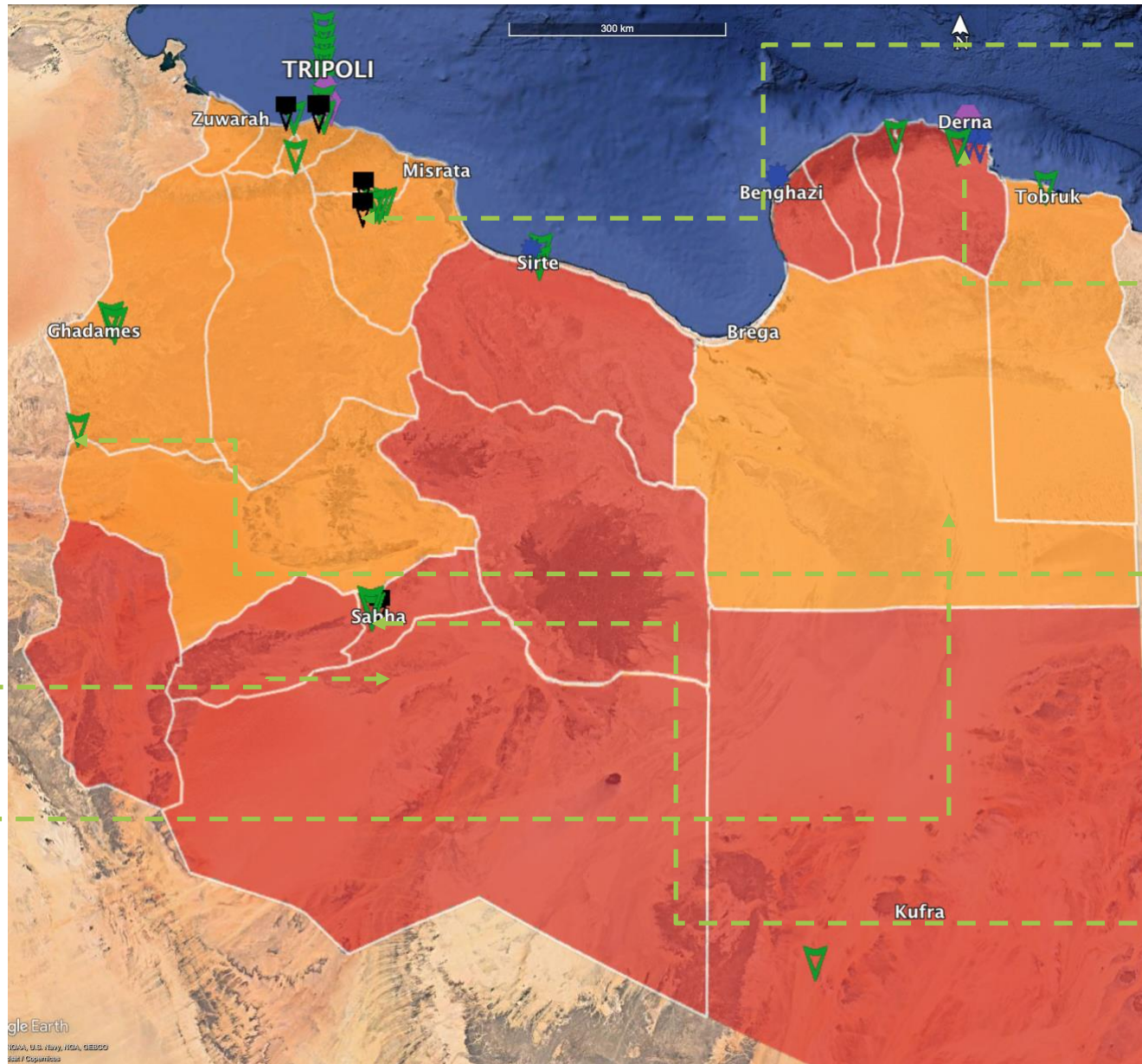
Key

THREAT INDICATORS

- Severe Threat
- High Threat
- Moderate Threat

EVENT INDICATORS

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



A previously undocumented armed group under the name of “Khalid Ibn Walid Brigade” reportedly arrested four criminals and freed some captives in the desert near Umm Al-Aranib, South of Libya, on 16 Sep.

On 22 Sep, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) stated that its subsidiary, the Arabian Gulf Oil Company (AGOCO), restored production of 3,000 barrels per day (bpd) at an abandoned well in the Messla oil field, East Libya. According to the NOC statement, production resumed at the well HH86-85 using the latest drilling techniques developed by Schlumberger after 16 years of inactivity.

Local reports suggest unidentified gunmen opened fire inside the headquarters of the election committee in Bani Walid on 18 Sep.

The Libyan National Army (LNA) spokesman, Ahmed Al-Mesmari, announced the killing of a prominent militant as a result of clashes between the LNA and militants in Derna on 22 Sep. Al-Mesmari identified the prominent militant as “Zizo Al-Jibani Sabah”.

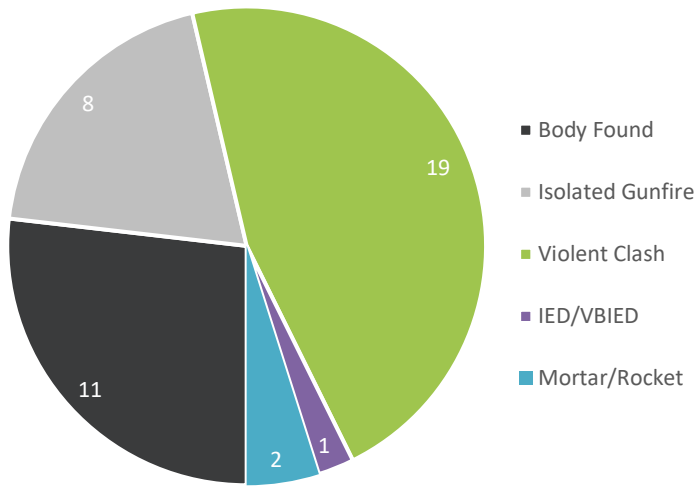
The Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) protesting the award of a catering contract ended their protest at the Wafa field Airport on 20 Sep. The oilfield airport subsequently resumed operations after the National Oil Corporation (NOC) publicly identified two PFG members behind the protest.

Reports suggest sporadic gunfire due to a tribal dispute resulted in four fatalities, including a Sub-Saharan African woman, in Sabha between 19 Sep and 20 Sep. Whispering Bell sources suggest the dispute opposed members of the Gaddafya tribe to the Awlad Suleiman.

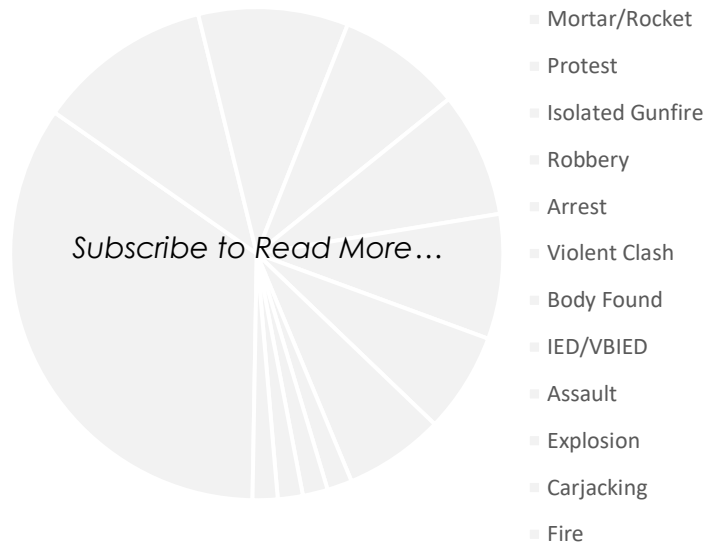
3. Nationwide Security Analysis

Surge in fatalities due to the resumption of militia clashes in Tripoli

Nationwide fatalities by type of attack (Past week)



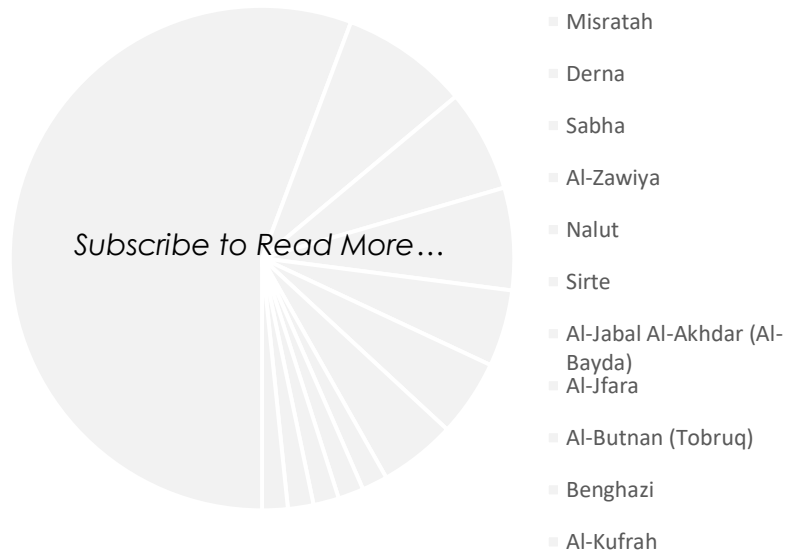
Nationwide incidents by type of attack (Past week)



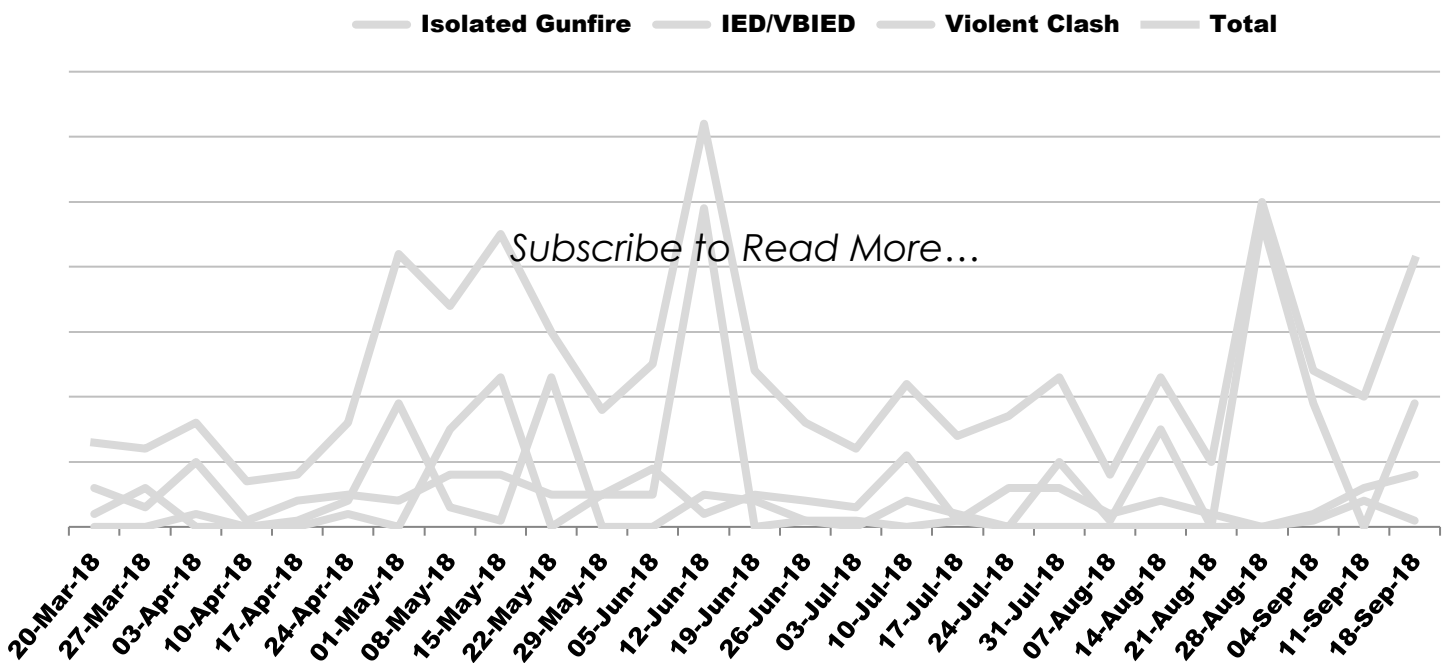
Nationwide fatalities by national district (Past week)



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 41 confirmed deaths in Libya, which compares to 20 deaths reported last week and 24 the week before. This week was marked by the resumption of heavy clashes between Al-Kaniat militia and Central Security Battalions on 18 Sep. Several security incidents were reported throughout the country, including 6 cases of isolated gunfire, 21 mortar/rockets, 7 protests, 5 robberies and 5 arrests.

In Western Libya, Whispering Bell recorded a total of 42 incidents, including 34 incidents in the capital city, Tripoli. This week was marked by the resumption of heavy militia clashes in Tripoli's southern areas. Clashes resumed between Al-Kaniat militia and Central Security Battalions in Tripoli's Southern areas resulting in three fatalities, including a Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB) member between 17 Sep and 18 Sep. The resumption of clashes follows the expiry of a 3-day deadline given by Libyan tribal chiefs in Tarhuna for the dissolution of Tripoli's militias. In a separate incident, reports suggest unidentified assailants carjacked a 2009 blue Hyundai Sonata vehicle near Tripoli's World Islamic Call Society at approximately 1500hrs on 17 Sep. Meanwhile, local reports suggest unidentified gunmen opened fire inside the headquarters of the election committee in Bani Walid on 18 Sep.

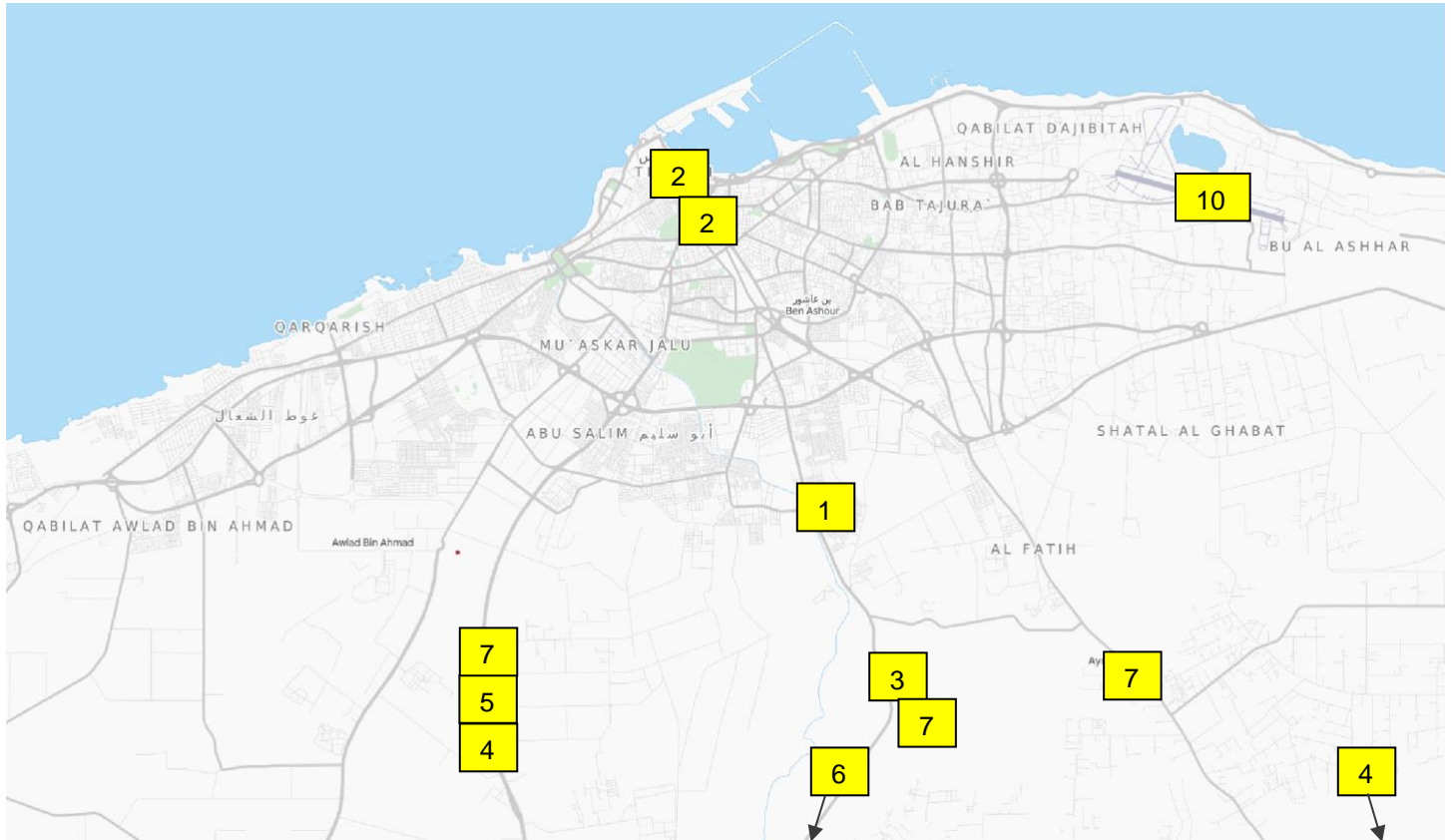
The week in Central Libya was marked by the discovery of explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Sirte. Sirte's Security and Protection Force located an ERW stockpile, including mortar rockets and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) in Sirte on 17 Sep. Authorities also seized three fuel smuggling trucks carrying approximately 70 to 90k litres of diesel on 17 Sep. The smugglers were reportedly travelling from Sirte to Jafara and were arrested.

Turning to Libya's South, sources reported unidentified assailants targeted the residence of a prominent security official in Sabha with a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) at approximately 0700hrs on 21 Sep. Sources suggest the assailants could be affiliated to the Islamic State (IS) or Al-Qaeda (AQ). In a separate incident, reports suggest sporadic gunfire due to a tribal dispute resulted in four fatalities, including a Sub-Saharan African woman, in Sabha between 19 Sep and 20 Sep. Whispering Bell sources suggest the dispute opposed members of the Gaddadfa tribe to the Awlad Suleiman.

In Libya's East, reports suggest a militant attempted to place an improvised explosive device (IED) under the vehicle of a Libyan National Army (LNA) Battalion 212 member, though the device exploded and resulted in the militant's injury in Derna on 19 Sep. Meanwhile, the body of the head of the pharmacies syndicate was found in Benghazi on 22 Sep with no further information related to the incident.

4. Tripoli Neighborhood Report

Clashes resume in Tripoli's South; MMC join front against Tripoli's militias



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (16 Sep) Gunmen kill Tunisian worker inside house
2. (16 – 17 Sep) Locals protest against existing political institutions
3. (17 Sep) TRB block roads in anticipation of Al-Kaniat attack
4. (18 Sep) Clashes resume between Al-Kaniat & central security battalions
5. (18-19 Sep) Badi & Ghneiwa militias clash, shelling along Airport Rd
6. (19 Sep) Gang rob vehicle and throw infant on side road
7. (19 – 21 Sep) Clashes continue across Southern areas; shelling
8. (21 Sep) Tripoli Protection force announce "Operation Badr"
9. (22 Sep) MMC join "Cleansing of Tripoli" operation
10. (23 Sep) Clashes continue; alleged Al-Bugra deadline to SDF

Clashes continue; MMC involvement

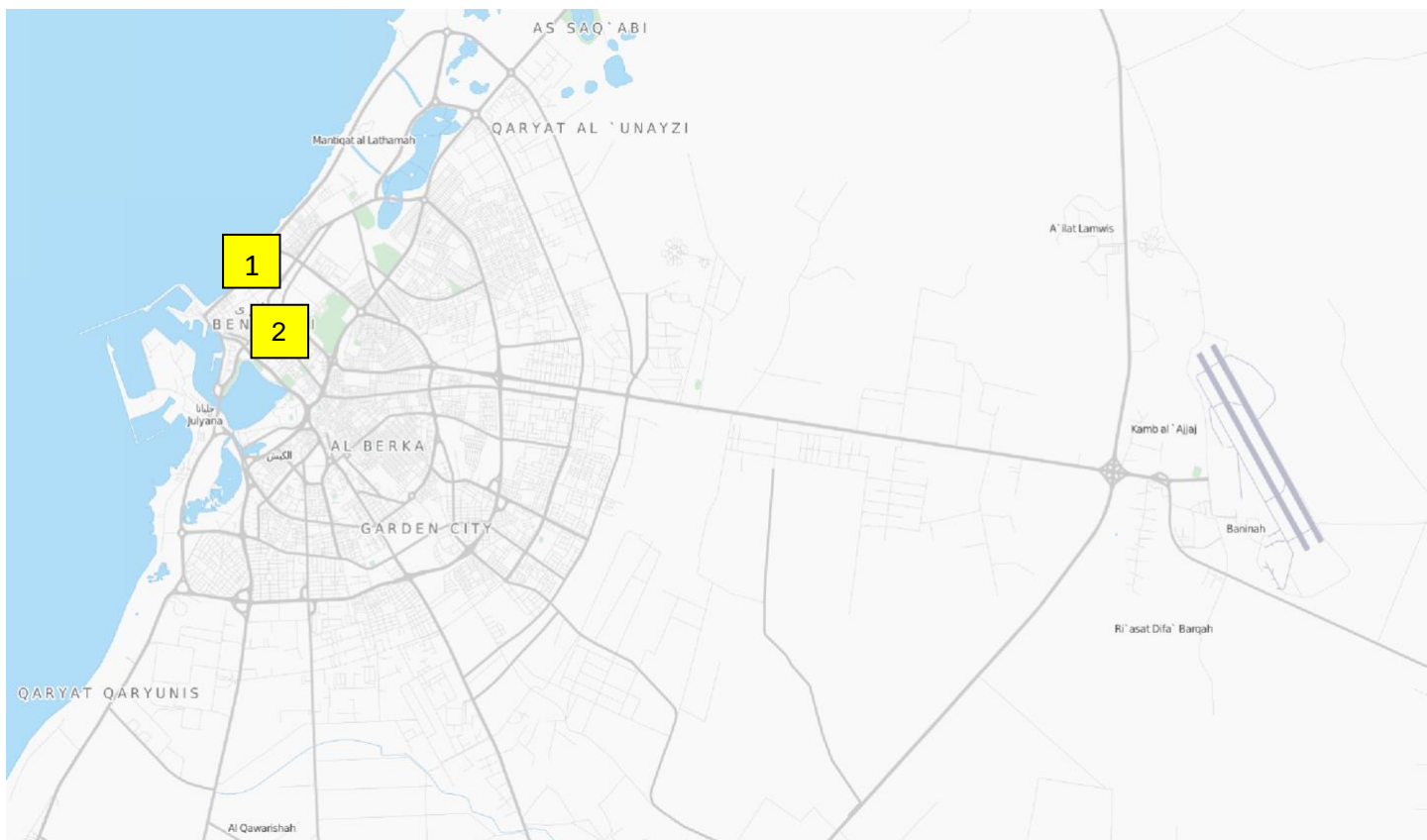
Heavy clashes reportedly erupted between Ghneiwa and Badi militias in Tripoli's Al-Furouziya Bridge, Sedi Saleem Street and Wali Al-Ahd Street at approximately 2100hrs on 22 Sep. Reports suggest a tank left Tripoli Zoo, the Ghneiwa militia's headquarters, at approximately 0000hrs on 23 Sep. Sounds of gunfire were reportedly heard from 7 April Camp in the Al-Kremiya area, with reports of heavy explosions in Wadi Alrabei at approximately 0200hrs on 23 Sep. Unconfirmed reports across untested social media outlets suggest the Al-Bugra militia gave the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) a deadline until 23 Sep to release its prisoners held at the Mitiga International Airport base. Meanwhile, indiscriminate shells fell on Khella Al-Furjan, and Tajoura area in the evening on 22 Sep with no reports of casualties. Reports suggest smoke rose from the Ain Zara area due to indiscriminate shelling at approximately 1800hrs on 22 Sep. In a separate development, leaders of Misrata's Military Council (MMC) announced their participation in the "cleansing of Tripoli" operation launched by Salah Badi against Tripoli's militias. The announcement came in a video statement circulated across social media outlets of the president of Misrata's

military council, commander of the Al-Bunyan Al-Marsous (BAM) operations room, in addition to other military commanders. The participants noted that they will fight as a united front against Tripoli's "rogue militias", whilst warning all parties of attacking forces moving to "cleanse" the capital. Following the announcement, some moderate Misratan factions refused the calls for mobilization towards the capital city and called for an end to the bloodshed.

The official announcement stands as a significant escalation of the ongoing clashes and could potentially be followed by ground reinforcements for Badi's Sumoud Brigade. Whilst clashes have been limited to Tripoli's Southern areas, any potential new alliances and/or support could result in rapid changes on the ground and an escalation of tensions. Additionally, should other Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) and pro-General National Congress (GNC) forces from cities including Misrata, Zawiya and Gharian potentially mobilize in support of Badi and Al-Kaniat militias, Tripoli's militias would be faced with a strong front of alliances and limited areas to retreat. Meanwhile, Mitiga Airport remains shut and operations are unlikely to resume as expected given the clashes, according to Libya's Airports Authority (LAA).

5. Benghazi Neighborhood Report

UNSMIL meets Mayor of Benghazi to discuss city's humanitarian needs



KEY INCIDENTS

1. (19 Sep) IED explodes; no security incidents
2. (22 Sep) Head of Pharmacies Syndicate found
3. (22 Sep) UNSMIL meet Mayor of Benghazi

IED explosion

Reports suggest an improvised explosive device (IED) exploded near the bridge between Sabri and Sidi Younes in Benghazi on 19 Sep. There were no further security incidents reported. IEDs and indiscriminate gunfire continue to pose a threat to civilian lives across Benghazi.

Body found

Reports suggest the body of the head of the Pharmacies Syndicate, Mohammed Ahmed Sharif Omar, was found opposite the Tibesti hotel in Benghazi on 22 Sep. According to the forensic report, there were no signs of injuries on the body. Additional reports suggest Omar committed suicide.

UNSMIL official in Benghazi

The United Nations (UN) Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya, Maria Riberio, and UN delegation, held a meeting with the Mayor of Benghazi, Abdulrahman Alabbar to discuss the city's humanitarian needs and means to expand the UN's services in Libya's East, including the opening of a UN office in Benghazi in the upcoming period. Additionally, Riberio stated that the mission is working on a study of Benghazi's demographics following the forced displacement that occurred during the war. In 2014, the head of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Khalifa Haftar, launched "Operation Dignity" to eliminate extremist presence in Benghazi. Ending in Feb 2016 with Haftar's victory, the aftermath of the war saw the destruction of the city, in addition to forced displacements.

6. What's next

Alliances begin to take shape & internal discord among GNA-aligned militias

POLITICAL FORECAST

On 16 Sep, the head of the Presidential Council (PC), Fayez Al-Serraj issued a series of decrees, however the solid implementation and effectiveness of the latter have yet to crystalize on the ground, particularly amid a resumption of militia clashes in the South of Tripoli. There have been increased calls from members of the House of Representatives (HoR) and other political factions for the PC of the Government of National Accord (GNA) to step down and reform. The HoR members noted the expiry of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), the resignation of several PC members, and the recent security vacuum in Tripoli, prompting reformation calls. Such calls to oust the GNA will likely increase, especially after reports the HoR finally ratified the constitution referendum law, potentially eliminating the challenge related to developing a constitutional basis for the elections though security remains a burden to the 10 Dec Paris election roadmap. Meanwhile, the UN Special Mission in Libya's (UNSMIL) public condemnation of the Ghneiwa militia was the latest evidence of the UN's more direct and assertive role in the conflict. The UNSMIL also hinted at the possibility of upcoming punitive measures against some militia leaders.

SECURITY FORECAST

In Tripoli, this week was marked by the resumption of clashes between Al-Kaniat militia and the Central Security Battalions, in addition to Badi forces against the Ghneiwa militia, in Tripoli's South. The latest development was the announcement of Misrata's Military Council to join the front against Tripoli's militias, however the latter was denounced by moderate Misratan factions. Tensions will likely escalate across the capital city, particular if additional Western forces mobilize towards Tripoli. The rival sides will likely focus on increasing support from various factions to consolidate their front, whilst seizing strategic locations. Mitiga International Airport will likely remain closed amid a resumption of clashes and alleged reports of Al-Bugra militia threatening the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) to attack the airport over prisoners. In the wider West and central region, Tripoli's clashes could fuel local protests and increase grievances as they pose a threat to the region's stability. In Libya's South, reports of tribal clashes resulting in fatalities could potentially fuel acts of retaliation in Sabha. Turning to the East, the Libyan National Army (LNA) will likely focus on eliminating remnants of militants in Derna. Meanwhile, Benghazi may remain on high alert amid turmoil across the country, particularly in the West.

WHAT OTHER EXPERTS SAY

In an article for "*The Wall Street Journal*", the authors, Jared Malsin and Benoit Faucon, discuss how the Islamic State (IS) is taking advantage of Libya's security vacuum by carrying out sporadic attacks, whilst threatening the country's oil flow. "Islamic State is staging a resurgence in chaotic Libya, claiming more than a dozen attacks in the North African country this year and threatening to disrupt the flow of oil from one of the world's most significant suppliers. The group's re-emergence comes two years after Libyan forces backed by U.S. air power dislodged the extremist group from its stronghold in the coastal city of Sirte, and it erodes one of the signature victories in the yearslong U.S.-led military campaign against the militants. U.S. forces have kept up a steady barrage of strikes targeting Islamic State fighters in the country, including a drone strike in late August that killed a group member in Bani Walid, southeast of the capital, Tripoli, according to the U.S. Africa Command, which oversees American military operations in the country. Islamic State currently has between 400 and 750 members in Libya, an AFRICOM spokesman said recently. But Libya's widening security vacuum and worsening internecine violence have given the group room to maneuver. Islamic State's Libyan branch has claimed responsibility for more than a dozen attacks since early this year. "They use these attacks to show they're back in business, to rebrand themselves, to draw recruits," said Frederic Wehrey, a Libya expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "said Malsin and Faucon.

LIBYANS AND THE ARAB STREET

In an article for "*Atlantic Council*", the author, Elissa Miller, highlights the role of foreign interference in weakening the United Nations (UN) Action Plan for Libya. "While key international players backed Salame's action plan for Libya, they were also separately pursuing their interests in the country. This practice has continued over the past year and resulted in paralyzing Salame's plan. In May of this year, Paris hosted another meeting between Serraj and Haftar and announced that presidential and parliamentary elections would take place on December 10, 2018. Although Salame's vision would culminate in the holding of elections, his action plan did not set a concrete date for elections. In effect, Paris was seizing control of the international discourse surrounding the future of Libya and presenting itself as the key mediator and negotiator. Italy, meanwhile, has bristled at Macron's actions on Libya, with Rome expressing emphatic opposition to elections in December due to continued chaos in Libya. The former colonial power is clearly taking unilateral steps to leverage its influence in Libya. In July, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced his country will host its own conference that will look for ways to stabilize Libya. In addition, Italian Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi recently held talks with Haftar in Benghazi in an effort to boost ties. Events over the past year therefore clearly show how Salame's action plan fell victim – predictably – to the interventions of foreign actors in Libya." said Miller.

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